

## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **HIPPERHOLME AND LIGHTCLIFFE HIGH SCHOOL**

Lightcliffe, Halifax

LEA area: Calderdale

Unique reference number: 107578

Headteacher: Mrs K E Mort

Lead inspector: Terence Parish

Dates of inspection: 24<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> Nov 2003

Inspection number: 259124

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11-18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1073
School address:	Stoney Lane Lightcliffe Halifax
Postcode:	HX3 8TL
Telephone number:	01422 201028
Fax number:	01422 204615
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs H M Bottomley
Date of previous inspection:	27/04/1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is a sports college and has lead school status for the sports co-ordinator initiative. It has the Investors in People award. Attainment on entry is now broadly average, but it has been significantly lower and there are fewer high attainers than in a true comprehensive intake because there are local grammar schools. There are ten per cent more boys than girls overall; in Year 11 this increases to 20 per cent. Most pupils are white. About seven per cent are from a range of ethnic minorities, mostly Asian British, and very few experience any difficulty due to the use of the English language. The school is popular; about three-quarters of pupils are local, but an increasing number of pupils travel to the school by bus from other areas of Halifax, consequently, the school has far more pupils than it was built to take. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is average. Few pupils leave or enter the school other than in July and September. The sixth form is smaller than average and less have joined it this year than last; numbers were stable over the previous four years. Attainment of students entering the sixth form is below average.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
15465	Parish	Lead inspector	
12775	Goodchild	Lay inspector	
7958	Lewis	Team inspector	Special educational needs Film studies
31100	Hunter	Team inspector	Mathematics
22691	Woodhouse	Team inspector	Science Chemistry
21806	Swinnerton	Team inspector	Design and technology
22906	Hodgson	Team inspector	Physical education Sports studies Information and communication technology (ICT) post 16
17404	Tolley	Team inspector	Modern languages
18447	Cohen	Team inspector	History Business
14841	Duffey	Team inspector	ICT 11-16
30899	Boden	Team inspector	Art and design Graphics
12475	Johnson	Team inspector	Music Citizenship
12003	Marfleet	Team inspector	English
28101	Lagden	Team inspector	History
22849	Catlow	Team inspector	Geography

The inspection contractor was:

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a good school** that gives good value for money. Standards of work are average, but pupils' achievement is good. Achievement is helped by good teaching, pupils' overall good behaviour and attitudes, and the very good relationships between pupils and with teachers. Good leadership and management overall are enhanced by very good leadership by the headteacher, who has an excellent vision for the school. The underlying drive for raising achievement and further improving teaching and learning is very impressive. Rapid improvement is likely to happen because of the high quality of people in key positions, very good strategic management and excellent financial planning. These underpin very good plans to help pupils do better. The school has some significant weaknesses to address, but is well aware of these and has them in hand.

#### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- End of Year 9 national test results improved significantly in 2003.
- Standards in science are above average in Years 7-9.
- The school is very inclusive overall and provides good care and support and good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Pupils' confidence and self-esteem are very good and they respect each other.
- The school provides very good support and, as a result, pupils settle in well and have clear targets for their improvement
- Links with the community and with other schools and colleges are very good and help enrich pupils' learning and their understanding of life beyond school.
- Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) overall is unsatisfactory, although some good use is made of ICT in a broad range of subjects.
- Leadership and management of mathematics are unsatisfactory and this leads to unsatisfactory achievement in Years 10 and 11.
- Religious education does not meet statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form; the requirement for a daily act of collective worship is not met.

Improvement since the last inspection is good overall and significant improvements have happened in the last two years. Senior leadership and management are much better. Monitoring, evaluation and analysis of school systems, teaching, learning and results are much better. Sports college developments are very good. ICT has improved, but has been undermined by staffing difficulties that can only now be resolved. Weaknesses in provision for religious education remain which result in part from recruitment difficulties that have now been resolved.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	C	D	D	B
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations		D	N/A	

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average  
For Year 11, similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

**Standards are broadly average across all years and pupils and students generally achieve well.** There are significantly more boys than girls in some years and this has also been the case in the past; combined with some selection by ability in the area, this means standards compared to many comprehensives are likely to be lower. However, pupils achieve well in Years 7-9; standards in English and in science are above average and in mathematics standards are average. Pupils are currently achieving satisfactorily in Years 10 and 11; standards in English and science are average, in mathematics below average. Overall, boys achieve as well as girls, and pupils from ethnic minorities achieve at least as well as their peers. Standards in ICT and religious education are below average and pupils achieve unsatisfactorily; in citizenship standards are above average and pupils achieve well.

Pupils' attitudes towards school and their work are good; their behaviour is good. Attendance and punctuality are both good. **The spiritual, social, moral and cultural development of pupils is good overall.** Pupils appreciate their own and others' cultural traditions well.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is good: teaching and learning are good;** the curriculum is satisfactory; pupils and students are well cared for. Teaching and learning are good in many subjects, including English and physical education in all years and science in Years 7-9. Teaching is satisfactory in mathematics. Teaching and learning in ICT are unsatisfactory overall, but are satisfactory in Years 7 and 11; in Year 7 because better planning is taking effect and in Year 11 because pupils are better involved in GCSE work.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are good overall.** Most facets of the governors' work are done well, although there is non-compliance in several statutory responsibilities. Despite these weaknesses governance is considered good by inspectors. The leadership of the headteacher is very good, that of other key staff good overall. Management of the school is very good. The leadership group, which includes the business manager, is very strong and is beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of provision in many subjects.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Both parents and pupils are broadly well satisfied with the school. There were some concerns about homework provision, which inspectors judge is satisfactory overall, and behaviour in classes where lessons are not well managed; inspectors found there were a small proportion of these. Unsatisfactory learning about computers concerned some parents and more pupils; inspectors agree with these concerns.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Further improve provision for ICT, particularly leadership and management and lesson planning.
- Improve both the leadership and management of mathematics and raise achievement in it.
- and, to meet statutory requirements:
- ensure that religious education meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form; and ensure that the requirement for a daily act of collective worship is met.



## THE SIXTH FORM AT HIPPERHOLME AND LIGHTCLIFFE HIGH SCHOOL

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Provision in the sixth form is good** and is cost effective. Students enter the sixth form with standards that are below average overall. Standards achieved in the sixth form are average and improving; students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Teaching and learning are good. The range of courses offered meets the needs of the students appropriately. Minority ethnic groups are well represented and achieve well. The sixth form is well led and managed and organised.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students' attitudes are positive.
- Teaching and learning are good and enable students to achieve well.
- Standards in film studies are well above average.
- Systems for monitoring and evaluating students' achievement and progress and setting targets are not as effective as they might be.
- Provision for developing both numerical and ICT skills in the sixth form is unsatisfactory.

### QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision in English language is <b>good</b> . Standards are above average; students achieve well because of good teaching and learning. Leadership and management are good.
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is <b>satisfactory</b> . Standards are below average. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and enable more able students to achieve well. Leadership and management are satisfactory.
Science	Provision in chemistry is <b>very good</b> . Standards are below average, but improving, and students achieve well. Teaching and learning are very good. Leadership and management are good.
Information and communication technology	Provision in information and communication technology is <b>satisfactory</b> . Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Standards are average and the majority of students achieve well. Leadership and management are satisfactory.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Provision in graphics with materials technology is <b>satisfactory</b> . Standards are average and improving. Teaching is satisfactory and enables students to achieve as they should. Leadership and management are satisfactory.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in film studies is <b>very good</b> . Standards are well above average. Teaching and learning are very good and allow students to achieve very well. Leadership and management are very good.

Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Provision in sports studies is <b>very good</b> . Teaching is very good. Standards are average. Students achieve well. Leadership and management are very good.
Business	Provision in business education is <b>satisfactory</b> . Good teaching enables students to make satisfactory progress in GNVQ and AS and A level and good progress in AVCE. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall.

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*The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post- 16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.*

## **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

The advice, guidance and support that students receive are satisfactory. There is no formal induction programme for students when they enter the sixth form. Tutors are responsible for monitoring students' academic progress, but students report there is an inconsistency amongst tutors in carrying this out. Tutor teams have a high commitment to the pastoral care of students. Good carers' advice is provided

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM**

**The school's leadership and management of the sixth form are good.** There is a clear understanding of both strengths and weaknesses. The school does its best to meet the needs and aspirations of its students and is developing ways of improving its provision through collaboration with other post 16 providers in the area. Quality assurance through monitoring, evaluation and improvement is not effectively developed to ensure that all students achieve as well as they could.

## **STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

Students' views of the sixth form are positive. They appreciate the help and guidance they are given, especially for university applications. They feel that the accommodation and facilities for sixth formers could be improved. They have difficulty finding study space because the library is sometimes used for supporting the learning of pupils with special educational needs. Students state that there is inconsistency in the quality of monitoring of their academic progress.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards are broadly average across all years and pupils and students generally achieve well. Pupils achieve well in Years 7-9. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in Years 10 and 11. Students achieve well in the sixth form.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in science in Years 7-9 are above average.
- Standards in mathematics in Years 10 and 11 are below average and pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Standards are rising overall in Years 7-11.
- Standards in citizenship are above average in all years and pupils achieve well.
- Standards in most subjects are average and pupils achieve well in them, but standards are below average and pupils underachieve in ICT and religious education.
- In the sixth form, standards are well above average in film studies, above average in English, below average, but improving, in chemistry.

#### Commentary

1. Pupils' attainment when starting at the school has been below average due to local grammar school selection distorting the attainment profile. This has also contributed to there being more boys than girls overall. There has always been a wide spread of ability; a significant increase in admissions in Year 7 has brought the number of boys and girls almost level and the attainment on entry of the current Year 7 is broadly average, with a higher proportion of more able pupils than is typical of any other year.
2. National test results at the end of Year 9 in 2003 improved significantly; English results improved the most, followed by science; mathematics results improved a little. Against national standards, test results were a little above average overall, certainly above average in English and average in mathematics; they were close to well above average in science. Standards overall were well above those attained nationally by pupils of similar prior attainment. Pupils achieved very well in both English and mathematics (English was better) and exceptionally in science; test results in science were amongst the top five per cent nationally for pupils with similar prior attainment. Teacher assessments of ICT standards at the end of Year 9, in summer 2003, show standards then to be below average.

#### Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.3 (32.8)	33.3 (33.3)
Mathematics	34.8 (34.5)	35.3 (34.7)
Science	35.1 (33.8)	33.7 (33.3)

*There were 181 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

3. Over five years, the trend in test results has broadly followed the national trend of slow improvement, but this hides a decline between 1999 and 2001. Results then began to improve, improvement accelerating in 2003, closely following a school focus on teaching and learning. For some years, girls have attained better than boys, but the difference is not huge; girls' results are generally a little above girls' average results, boys' results a little below boys' average results. In the dip year of 2001 both boys' and girls' results were significantly below average, partly due to the lower attainment on entry of that cohort of pupils.

#### Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003

	School results	National results
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Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	35 (41)	52.6 (49.9)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	95 (94)	88.6 (81.2)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (98)	94.6 (94.6)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	34.8 (34.7)	34.7 (34.6)

*There were 176 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

4. In 2003, GCSE examination results were below average overall, when compared to national results. The school's experiment of entering pupils attaining highly in English a year early makes comparisons difficult. If early entry is taken into account, the proportion of A\*-C grades in English was below average, science results were similar. The proportion of A\*-C grades in mathematics was well below average.
5. The dip in numbers attaining A\*-C GCSE results in 2003 caused some concern to parents and others connected with the school. However, this was the cohort that was weak in end of Year 9 tests in 2001 (see above) and who had been weak when they started school. Overall, they actually achieved satisfactorily; the proportion who achieved one or more A\*-G grades was very high, although fewer pupils attained A\*-C grades than might have been expected. Comparing English results with those of similar pupils in other schools, shows that the proportion of A\*-C grades (including early entry) was above average, as it was in science. In mathematics, the proportion of these higher grades was well below average. If results in pupils' eight best subjects are considered then their achievement was good compared to their prior attainment
6. It is clear that there is a hierarchy of attainment in test and examination results between English, mathematics and science. By the most recent Year 9 results, the hierarchy is science, English, mathematics; in 2003 GCSE results it is English/science, then mathematics. As the English department gets their best candidates to attain well in three related examinations in two years, as opposed to science's two, then English is arguably the better performer. Standards of current work support this hierarchy; in Years 7-9 standards in science are consistently above the national average whilst standards in English are improving and often above average, particularly in Year 7. Standards in mathematics are average. In Years 10 and 11 standards in English and science are both average; in mathematics they are below average. In science, lower standards amongst older pupils, compared to younger pupils, are due to the relatively lower ability of pupils, not a significant decline in the quality of teaching and learning, although, as in all three subjects, the school's effective adoption of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy is reaping rewards amongst younger pupils. Pupils' achievements are good in English across all years. Achievement is good overall in science in Years 7-9 and satisfactory between the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11; pupils in the current Year 10 achieved very highly in their end of Year 9 science tests in 2003. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in mathematics in Years 7-9, but unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Leadership and management are the clear reasons why a hierarchy exists in these three core subjects; both are good overall in English and science; both are unsatisfactory in mathematics.
7. Standards in GCSE ICT, a half course, were very low in 2003, whereas in previous years, although below average, in line with pupils' overall attainment. The reasons for this fall in standards were staffing problems and leadership and management difficulties. Standards of current work continue to suffer and are below average overall; they are average in Years 7 and 11 because of new schemes of work and generally more able pupils in Year 7; in Year 11 because these pupils did sufficient work when in Year 10, despite the overall staffing difficulties. Both pupils and parents expressed concerns about work in ICT. The school and governors are aware of this, but were unavoidably delayed in making a new appointment to address the situation. Action is now being taken and inspectors underlined the need to proceed quickly with interim measures to help improve achievement and raise standards.
8. The only other subject where attainment and/or achievement are unsatisfactory is religious education. Long-term staffing problems and a lack of teaching time in Years 10 and 11 cause this. Pupils are currently making good progress in lessons due to good, but temporary, teaching. A new appointment to lead and manage religious education has been made and the curriculum model is under review.
9. A relatively new subject, citizenship, is successful; pupils achieve well and standards of work are above average. Very good leadership and management, coupled with good teaching, account for this.

10. Standards attained by pupils with special educational needs vary as some pupils have learning difficulties and others have behavioural difficulties. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs is good and sometimes very good in lessons. They achieve well overall. The work files of pupils in the learning resource base show good achievement in their literacy skills.
11. Overall, standards of work are average in Years 10 and 11, a better picture than GCSE results indicated in 2003. The trend in GCSE results, which were improving at a faster rate than national results up to 2001, appears set to continue in 2004.

#### **Sixth form**

#### **Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2003**

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	92.5 (96.5)	n/a (94.8)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	20.5 (30.6)	n/a (39.4)
Average point score per student	250.0 (259.4)	n/a (263.3)

*There were 55 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

12. Standards attained in AS, A-level and vocational courses are broadly average. Students' achievement, in relation to their prior attainment, is good overall. In examinations, almost all students entered gained a pass. Standards attained in 2002 examinations were above average overall, but variable; for example, well above average in film studies and English literature, well below average in general studies and sports studies. In 2003, standards fell in English, and overall standards were broadly average. Relatively small numbers in many subjects mean trends have to be interpreted with care. Students' achievement, in relation to their prior attainment, was very good in film studies, and good in English, mathematics, chemistry, ICT, sports studies and business education. Students achieved as expected in other subjects.
13. In the eight subjects chosen for inspection, standards of work are well above average in film studies, above average in English language and broadly average in mathematics, ICT, graphics, sports studies and business education. Standards are below average in chemistry. Students' achievement is similar to the picture painted by examination performance given above.

## **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils' attitudes towards school and their work are good; their behaviour is good. Attendance and punctuality are both good. The spiritual, social, moral and cultural development of pupils is good overall. Pupils well appreciate their own and others' cultural traditions.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' positive attitudes contribute to their good achievement.
- Working relationships between pupils and with staff are very good and based on mutual respect.
- The moral and social development of pupils is very good; cultural development is good and spiritual development satisfactory.

### **Commentary**

14. Most pupils are able to sustain their concentration well and take an interest in their studies. When given the opportunity they willingly accept responsibilities, although such opportunities are limited. A school council has recently been introduced and, together with year councils, is becoming an effective forum for pupils to present the views of their peers and be part of the school's consultation process.
15. A small number of pupils, on occasions, fail to engage in lessons and can disrupt the learning of others. Sometimes this is in response to less than satisfactory teaching. The school is developing effective provision to support these pupils and help them to improve their standard of behaviour. Fixed term exclusions rose significantly last year due to an unusual incident that involved several pupils. No pupils have been permanently excluded from the school and fixed term exclusions are normally a rare occurrence. The school council contributed to the inspection process both before the inspection and during it; few pupils expressed concern about their peers' attitudes or behaviour. Year 7 said some bullying occurred between them, but this was quickly sorted by the school.
16. Pupils are very well aware of right and wrong actions and have a very clear understanding of what is expected of them. Opportunities for pupils to debate moral issues are provided in many subjects. In citizenship lessons, for example, pupils look at the human aspects of the impact of war when studying the plight of refugees and asylum seekers. In other lessons racism and prejudice are discussed. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of social responsibility is reflected well in their actions expressing concern for others in both the school and wider community. Cultural development is good, enhanced by work in many subjects, visits and visitors. Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory; whilst creative subjects, in particular, provide stimuli, opportunities are lost at the beginning of the day and in the regular, large, morning assemblies.

**Ethnic background of pupils****Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	986	51	0
White – any other White background	11	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	7	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	6	3	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	10	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	37	0	0
Black or Black British - Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	1	0
Parent / pupil preferred not to say	8	0	0
Information not obtained	1	0	0

*The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.8	School data	0.4
National data	7.8*	National data	1.2*

*The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year. \**

*This data is for the previous year as national data for 2002/3 was not available*

17. The attendance of pupils is good and above the national standard for all schools. Last year there were 34 pupils in Year 11 who had attendance levels below 80 per cent. The school, in conjunction with the education welfare officer, worked hard to retain them in mainstream education by offering a range of flexible learning opportunities. However, pupils failed to respond to these and this is reflected in the results of their GCSE examinations. The punctuality of pupils is good, but affected at times by late arriving transport.

**Sixth form**

18. As in the main school, students demonstrate good attitudes towards their studies and work hard to achieve the grades in external examinations they need to further their career aspirations. They provide good role models for younger pupils by acting as mentors to the incoming Year 7 pupils and undertaking paired reading. Apart from this, contact with the main school is limited. Attendance is satisfactory overall, although the present system of registration does not allow attendance to be systematically tracked so that it can be improved.

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The quality of education provided by the school is good: Teaching and learning are good; the curriculum is satisfactory; pupils and students are well cared for. Links with parents, community and other institutions are very good.

**Teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning are good across all years. The quality of assessment of pupils' and students' work is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11 and good in the sixth form.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good in most subjects in Years 7-11, satisfactory in mathematics, unsatisfactory in ICT.
- Assessment is satisfactory in most subjects in Years 7-11, good in English, art and design, and modern languages, unsatisfactory in religious education.
- Teaching and learning are good or better in most subjects inspected in the sixth form; they are very good in chemistry, physical education, film studies and classics, satisfactory in mathematics, ICT and graphics.
- Assessment is satisfactory or better in most subjects inspected in the sixth form, and is excellent in film studies.
- Teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs are good overall.
- Sports college status is improving teaching and learning.
- There is no provision for students with weak numeracy and/or ICT skills in the sixth form to develop them, unless they are following particular courses where they are taught them.

### Commentary

#### ***Summary of teaching observed during the inspection of Years 7-11 in 133 lessons***

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (2.3%)	16 (12.0%)	64 (48.1%)	44 (33.1 %)	6 (4.5 %)	0	0

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.*

- Teaching and learning are predominantly good across all years, but markedly better in Years 7-9 and in the sixth form. The better edge in Years 7-9 is significantly due to hard work that has been done to influence teaching and learning strategies under the umbrella of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. This was a significant factor in improving end of Year 9 test results in 2003. In the sixth form, smaller class sizes and motivated students support and reinforce teaching and learning.
- The excellent lessons were in design and technology (two) and in science. 'Dynamic delivery of starter activity; excellent subject knowledge; very good communication; excellent use of ICT and video; pupils thoroughly immersed', are judgements associated with these lessons. Very good lessons were seen in a range of subjects with significant numbers in English, citizenship and physical education. 'Plenty of challenge; planning and organisation very good; very good class management; brings the best out of a potentially difficult class; learning support assistants well used; marking and grading very frequent; well matched work (to pupils); clear explanations and objectives; very good balance of teacher input and pupil participation; lively and interesting', were all judgements made about very good lessons.
- Half the unsatisfactory lessons were in ICT, the others in English, science and French. The latter three were characterised by unsatisfactory or poor attitudes to learning, which were not helped by either insufficient planning to cope with less able pupils and/or unsatisfactory management of pupils. In ICT, unsatisfactory lessons were more due to teachers' inexperience or lack of understanding of current practice in and expectations of ICT standards and/or mundane tasks, which were not of an appropriate standard and did not challenge pupils. Unsatisfactory teaching and learning in ICT are related to the lack of leadership, which the school has in hand.
- Pupils, through their school council, consider that teaching is good, as do most parents. Pupils also say that their work is well marked. A significant number of parents have concerns about the frequency and quality of homework whilst pupils were happy with it. Both pupils and parents expressed some concern about ICT, some pupils saying they did not learn anything. Inspectors broadly agree with all pupils' views, although ICT is not quite so bleak now as it seems to have been last year. Assessment is using information as well as marking and is satisfactory overall. Homework is satisfactorily set in most subjects and well set in design and technology and modern languages.



23. Most aspects of teaching and learning are good, particularly in Years 7-9. Of note are teachers' very good command of their subject in modern languages and physical education; most subjects utilise learning support assistants (LSAs) well to help pupils learn; pupils acquire new knowledge and skills well and work hard to apply their learning. Most aspects of teaching, learning and assessment are unsatisfactory in ICT and a significant number in religious education. In both pupils do not learn enough or know how well they are doing.
24. There is some support for pupils with special educational needs in a number of subject areas. The core subjects of English, science and mathematics are well supported in lower sets. The school has invested substantially to employ and train LSAs; they frequently work within one subject area and have built up specific skills in order to support pupils, and the extra confidence gained through training and familiarity with the subject ensures a high quality of support in lessons. LSAs and teachers working with pupils do so with sensitivity, especially when dealing with pupils with severe learning or behavioural difficulties. The liaison between teaching staff, LSAs and the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) is good. LSAs report changes in pupils' demeanour or achievement in lessons so that difficulties are identified before they impact on the next lesson. LSAs discuss with class teachers progress made or interventions they have used. In lessons where teaching and learning were good or better, pupils had short tasks, clearly structured development of the topic being taught, and well informed LSAs supporting the lowest attainers. Some teachers do not adequately amend tasks to meet the needs of pupils with limited literacy or numeracy skills. For example, in some science lessons the worksheets being used were too complex and the language too difficult. This resulted in lower attaining pupils not being able to show their knowledge and understanding of the science because they were constrained by their limited literacy skills. The assessment of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Some teachers use pupils' individual education plans to set targets and monitor progress carefully. The records kept in the learning resource base are detailed, but not used in the pupils' files to show progress within the withdrawal groups. In a few lessons little attention is paid to the needs of pupils and there is little differentiation in work set.
25. Disruption by a small minority of pupils disrupts the flow of lessons for the majority in a few lessons. Teachers who have very good management skills minimise the effect of pupils with challenging behaviour. These teachers also utilise support well. Less experienced teachers do not always make sufficient use of support when it is available.

## **The sixth form**

### ***Summary of teaching observed during the inspection of the sixth form in 41 lessons***

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (4.9%)	7 (17.1 %)	22 (53.7 %)	8 (19.5 %)	2 (4.9%)	0	0

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.*

26. Both excellent lessons were in physical education; characteristics of the lessons were similar to those given above. Unsatisfactory lessons were in mathematics and general studies. In mathematics the relatively low standard of student entry in Year 12 was not taken sufficient notice of so students got lost; in general studies Year 13 expectations were too low, standards of work too low and there was little evidence of progress.
27. All aspects of teaching and learning were at least satisfactory in the subjects inspected. Relatively strong subjects such as English, chemistry and physical education challenge students very well, plan effectively, use time very well and ensure that students gain very well in knowledge, skills and understanding. The relatively weaker subjects are mathematics, design and technology and ICT. Numeracy is an issue across the sixth form; there is no provision for weak students to improve and only in number rich subjects do they get help; for example, in physics. Students do not have enough structured opportunities to improve their ICT skills unless it is one of their specialist subjects; students had a poor experience of ICT when younger and this position needs to be recovered.

## **Teaching and learning developments related to the sports college**

28. The school is now in its second year as a sports college. Targets set at the commencement are now being met, and there is particularly good progress in teachers' use of ICT, which is a central feature in the development plan of the sports college. Teachers make very good use of computers and interactive white boards in teaching of both GCSE and A-level courses. Video conferencing with another local school for A-level lessons, enables the sharing of expertise. The installation of the data projector in the sports hall is an exciting development, allowing teachers to make good use of action replays, to help pupils learn new skills. There are very good links with local primary schools through the School Sports Co-ordinator Scheme. Standards are being raised in primary schools, and pupils now start in Year 7 with better skills and understanding in physical education than in previous years.

### **The curriculum**

29. The curriculum is broadly satisfactory; it provides a wide range of worthwhile opportunities including an increasing number of vocational courses, but unsatisfactory organisation of it in Years 10 and 11 contributes to unsatisfactory provision for religious education. Good opportunities are available for extra-curricular work and other forms of enrichment. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall; accommodation for the sixth form is unsatisfactory as shortage of space does hinder achievement in several areas.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The acquisition of sports college status and hosting the School's Sports Co-ordinator initiative has resulted in good provision for physical education.
- The recently introduced course for potentially disaffected and vulnerable pupils in Year 10 is having a positive effect on their learning.
- Religious education does not meet the needs of the locally agreed syllabus in Years 10 and 11 or in the sixth form.
- The 'carousel system' that operates in Years 10 and 11 provides inadequate time for some subjects.
- The requirement for a daily act of collective worship is not met, although large assemblies are provided three times each week.

### **Commentary**

30. Pupils have the opportunity to choose from a wide range of courses at GCSE. Each pupil follows about ten GCSE courses through to completion. New courses like dance, drama, media studies and music have been introduced that provide for a wider range of interests and abilities. Some of these courses take place out of normal school hours owing to timetabling constraints or low numbers of pupils opting for them. A vocational dimension to the curriculum has been introduced with the dual award technology course in manufacturing. Pupils will have the opportunity to study two modern foreign languages in Year 10 next year as a result of modifications implemented in the curriculum in Years 7-9 now. Alternatively they will be able to drop languages and study other courses more appropriate to their needs. Opportunity is provided for pupils to take English GCSE a year early and they have attained high grades in this and then achieved well in media studies in Year 11. Some investigative work is being carried out in English with setting and single sex groups. Separate science subjects can be studied by Year 10 pupils. An alternative education programme introduced this year in Year 10 is proving successful in motivating pupils and has the possibility of leading to vocational study later. The school identifies pupils who are gifted and talented, but currently there is limited special provision for them. However, the school is investigating ways of improving provision.
31. Problems exist, as mentioned in the previous report, with the 'carousel' system that operates to teach careers, religious education, citizenship and personal social and health education. The time allocated to religious education and citizenship is insufficient to ensure that they are both adequately covered.
32. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is good overall. Some pupils are withdrawn from lessons to improve their literacy skills. There is no similar programme to address the needs of pupils with numeracy difficulties, as a result of recent staff changes. The ICT resources within the learning resource base are limited at present. Software to support literacy and numeracy is needed to provide pupils with opportunities for independent study to reinforce the work being done in lessons and the withdrawal groups. Limitations on time

organisation constrain short programmes of work, 20 minute blocks, which would benefit pupils who need daily reinforcement to improve skills. Consideration could be given to the use of tutor time in the morning. A group of Year 11 pupils are withdrawn from lessons for a half day each week and have successfully completed their first ASDAN assignment at a local radio station. Their next assignment, working with youth workers, is a community based environmental project to create a pond. This has provided an opportunity for a group of 14 pupils to enjoy doing something well and has lifted their self-esteem. The learning support base is well used at lunchtime and breaktimes. LSAs and teaching staff provide support outside lesson time for pupils who want help with homework or coursework. The atmosphere created is safe and secure and pupils are respected and expected to be meaningfully employed whilst there.

33. The school provides a good range of enrichment activities to support pupils' learning outside the school day. Subjects like English, mathematics, science and design and technology offer revision classes and holiday courses, and teachers make themselves available at lunchtime and after school. A free bus is provided on the day when most after-school activities take place to enable pupils who live a distance from school to participate. Specialist college status in sport and lead school status for the Sports Co-ordinator initiative, achieved in 2002, means the school offers a good range of sporting activities. There are good opportunities for pupils to join school teams. Opportunities also exist for non-competitive participation. Pupils can go on various visits, for example, the very popular Year 7 residential visits, skiing, foreign exchanges, drama performances, and to view the work of artists. Some pupils say they find the cost of visits prohibitive. There is an art club open to pupils in all years, but other provision in art is very limited. There is a range of opportunities for pupils who wish to be involved in music. These include choir, orchestra and guitar club, but few pupils are involved. Currently there is no financial provision to support pupils who wish to study a musical instrument and, consequently, many give up. This is particularly apparent when pupils enter the school in Year 7 having started learning an instrument in primary school. Neither have there been any recent visits to concerts or musicians visiting school.
34. There are sufficient qualified teachers to teach the curriculum in all subjects apart from religious education. Staffing is very good in science. The number of support staff within the school is high. Resources to support pupils' learning are satisfactory overall. They are unsatisfactory in religious education, but good in English. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. There are areas of weakness, for example, the huts used to teach English are of a poor quality and not conducive to a positive learning environment. Rooms for music have poor acoustics and are too small for the size of groups and this restricts activities. There is insufficient specialist accommodation in design and technology; the food room has to be used also for textile lessons. Accommodation for physical education and science is good.

#### **Sixth form**

35. The school caters appropriately, given the relatively low numbers concerned, for the different needs, interests and aspirations of students by asking them what subjects they want to study and then building the curriculum. Induction into the sixth form is a limited experience and students are not always clear what to expect. Some students have a very heavy workload and this affects standards. The decision not to teach separate courses in the key skills of communication, numeracy and ICT has left some students stranded with weak numeracy skills that have an adverse effect on their progress, particularly in science. All students take general studies alongside their chosen subject and, for some lower attaining students, the workload is too great. There is no provision for religious education in the sixth form.
36. There is very good physical education, both in the curriculum and for recreational purposes. Students can take the community sports leaders' award. A level and AS level in sports studies are offered, which include opportunities to be involved in video conferencing. The provision of human biology as an option is proving beneficial to students studying sports science.
37. A lack of studio provision in art and design and in design and technology limits the ability of students to work independently outside lessons and this affects standards.

#### **Care, guidance and support**

The school's provision to ensure the health, safety and welfare of pupils is good. The support, advice and guidance that pupils receive are very good; students in the sixth form receive satisfactory guidance. The involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Induction arrangements for pupils coming into the school are excellent.
  - There are strong pastoral teams who know their pupils well.
  - There is a high commitment to the inclusion of all pupils.
  - Arrangements for child protection are very good.
  - The amount of time allocated to the teaching of personal, social and health education in Years 10 and 11 is insufficient.
  - Time in morning tutorial sessions is sometimes wasted.
38. Almost all pupils think they get good support to help them with academic work. They say that they are treated fairly, and that the school is interested in their views.
39. Strong links with primary feeder schools ensures smooth transition into secondary education and pupils settle quickly. Pastoral teams stay with their year group throughout their time in school. They are able to build strong relationships with pupils and their families, which are supportive and promote good learning. This good knowledge of pupils and their background helps the school to provide support when needed. Pupils interviewed were confident that they would be able to ask members of staff for help, either academic or personal. There is an inconsistent use of time in the morning tutorial sessions. Pupils are frequently allowed to treat this time as a social occasion rather than part of their educational experience.
40. The recently appointed inclusion co-ordinator has effective strategies to support disaffected pupils. Learning mentors, also recently appointed, provide additional support. All pupils in Year 9 are interviewed prior to selecting courses for GCSE study by senior staff to ensure that they choose appropriate subjects to support their career choices. Alternative curriculum arrangements enable pupils who might otherwise drop out of mainstream education to gain qualifications. Very good links with the youth service help to extend the range of support available to pupils.
41. Pupils benefit from an effective careers education programme that prepares them well for the next stage of education or the world of work. There is an effective partnership with Connexions, who support the school in this aspect of its work. Though the schemes of work clearly outline a comprehensive sex and relationship module the lack of curriculum time allocated to personal, social and health education, and difficulties in staffing over the last year, have meant that some pupils have missed out on this important aspect of their education.
42. The arrangements for child protection are very good. Vulnerable children are monitored and their progress tracked. The school works in partnership with the relevant external agencies.
43. Apart from the recently introduced school and year councils, pupils' views are not routinely sought. The school council is being encouraged to become more proactive and involved in the day-to-day life and running of the school. Pupils are involved in setting their own targets, both personal and academic, on a termly basis. At the end of a module in personal, social and health education pupils are asked to evaluate the quality of the work and what they have gained. This aspect of the school's work is still in the developmental stage.

### **Sixth form**

44. The support, advice and guidance that students receive are satisfactory. Tutor teams demonstrate a high degree of pastoral care for students. The school consults prospective sixth formers about their choices and tries its best to meet their needs. Induction procedures are satisfactory, but students do not have the opportunity to explore what it means to be in the sixth form before they have made their decisions. They do have the opportunity to sample subjects, but this is not until after they have joined the sixth form in September. Students report that the quality and frequency of academic monitoring is inconsistent. Inspectors find that assessment of the work seen is satisfactory overall, although overall monitoring of students' progress is not as sharp as it might be.

## **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

45. The effectiveness of the school's links with its parents is good. The quality of the school's links with the community is very good. The school's links with other schools and colleges are very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The commitment of the school to developing an effective partnership with parents is high.
- Links with feeder primary schools and transition arrangements are excellent.
- The quality of links with the community enriches pupils' educational experience.
- Annual reports to parents vary between subjects in quality. Targets for improvement are mainly pastoral and few contain academic targets.

### **Commentary**

46. Parents are encouraged to become partners with the school in managing their child's learning. Meetings between Year 9 pupils, their parents and senior staff ensure that subjects chosen for GCSE courses meet both the academic and potential career needs of pupils. Learning mentors and pastoral staff make home visits when difficulties arise if parents are unable to attend meetings. Concerns expressed by parents are usually dealt with immediately by the pastoral team. Termly reports on academic progress are issued together with a more detailed annual report. However, the targets set for pupils to improve their work are usually pastoral and not academic. A new reporting system has been introduced this year to raise the standard of annual reports, which are currently satisfactory. In the Ofsted questionnaire a significant minority of parents expressed dissatisfaction with the current information provided about their children's progress.
47. The school benefits from effective links with local business and industry, both as a source of sponsorship and for placements that support the work of the classroom, or give pupils experience of the world of work. Links with a local bakery, for example, help food technology pupils to gain an understanding of manufacturing. A black footballer came to talk to pupils about racism in sport. Members of the ethnic minority community have been consulted by the school about its sex and relationships policy.
48. There is a very good partnership with other schools and colleges. An effective partnership has been developed with the eight primary feeder schools. There are bridging units in place in mathematics and English to help the transition of pupils from the primary to secondary phase of education. Primary pupils are regular visitors to the school from Year 5 onwards taking part in events such as the Egg Race with older pupils. The literacy co-ordinator has also taught taster lessons in all primary schools. Links with further education colleges and other alternative education providers are very good. Negotiations are currently taking place to work more closely with sixth form providers and extend the range of options open to sixth form students. Students in the sixth form are able to access the library at Huddersfield University to help them with their independent research. Video conferencing has been established with Leeds Metropolitan University and another sixth form.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Most facets of the governors' work are done well, although there is non-compliance in several statutory responsibilities. Despite these weaknesses governance is considered good by inspectors. The leadership of the headteacher is very good, that of other key staff good overall. Management of the school is very good. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good; significant developments are underway.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The vision, aspirations and sense of purpose of the headteacher are excellent.
- Strategic planning is excellent.
- Leaders promote equality and inclusion very well.
- The monitoring of data on pupils' progress is very good in Years 7 to 11, but only satisfactory in the sixth form.
- The school makes a very good contribution to initial teacher training.
- Staff induction, performance and workload are all well managed.
- Financial management is excellent and best value principles very well applied.

## Commentary

49. Governors are clear about how they want the school to improve, what it does well and where improvement is still needed. They challenge the headteacher about changes she considers necessary, for example, the reshaping of the leadership group, but listen, weigh things up, and fully support actions once they have been decided. They have encouraged assemblies three times each week and know classes have 'form' time on the other two. One governor regularly attends and takes part in assemblies. Nonetheless, the legal act for a daily act of collective worship is still not met. They are aware of the 'thin' nature of statutory religious education provision in Years 10 and 11, but have seen little way out of it until the appointment of a head of religious education, which they have now succeeded to do; the position is taken up just after publication of this report. They assumed that aspects of general studies would provide statutory religious education to sixth form students; this was a reasonable assumption as very few sixth forms provide compulsory discrete religious education. No students interviewed indicated that they were dissatisfied with the current provision for religious education. Governors also recognise that provision of ICT is not yet satisfactory, although it does meet statutory requirements. Following the last inspection they ensured that sufficient resources were purchased and the curriculum appropriately changed. Governors fully supported the strong actions needed to resolve staffing difficulties and realise that these actions did adversely affect pupils' progress. They are now supporting the school in actions needed to ensure that ICT provision is quickly made satisfactory.
50. The headteacher has been in post for just two years. In those two years she has changed the school to a specialist college and achieved Investors in People status. More significantly, the headteacher has improved the professional development of teachers, successfully shifting the focus of the school to teaching and learning. The effect of this is emerging in much better end of Year 9 test results and good leadership of subjects that have taken middle management training fully on board. The use of external consultants both inside and outside the school has improved the evaluation of teaching and resulted in the use of a wider range of teaching methods. Alongside this she recognised that the leadership group needed specific expertise, such as in managing the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, and set about persuading governors and, with them, making excellent appointments. The leadership group are excellent role models in and out of the classroom and support teachers and departments well. Specialist college status has brought some developmental money into the school, which is being very effectively spent and has enhanced the community provision the school can make, including support to other schools.
51. Strategic planning is excellent and supports the vision and high aspirations of managers and governors. Excellent financial management enables proper forecasts to be made; each element of planning is woven into the overall fabric with appropriate checks and evaluations to ensure that it moves forward smoothly. People with specific responsibilities are named, times for completion or monitoring are given and resources allocated. Plans are focused on ensuring that all pupils benefit; the school has a strong commitment to inclusion.
52. Data about how well pupils do at each stage of their education and in their ongoing work is very well compiled and communicated to teachers and form tutors. Pupils' achievement as they move through the school is measured from this data, which provides a good foundation for teachers' performance management and for setting academic targets for pupils. How well it is used by teachers in the classroom is variable, but broadly satisfactory. Very high school aspirations lead to very high targets for GCSE performance. These targets are not generally met, although expectations based on pupils' prior attainment are, even in the 'dip' year of 2003.
53. The school provides very well for initial teacher training. Well-behaved pupils, good managers and innovative developmental work on learning and teaching provide a very good base for a student teacher to build up teaching skills. Alongside this there are very good informal and formal links with higher education including video conferencing. Good staff induction and workload management are features of the Investor in People award that the school gained.
54. The financial management of the school is excellent. There are effective systems in place to monitor finance, including an annual external audit. This enables the school to focus its expenditure innovatively on areas that it has identified for development and improvement. The Key Stage 3 Strategy funding, for example, has been used creatively to support the employment of four learning mentors to help raise the standards of attainment of all pupils.

## Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3 676 180
Total expenditure	3 601 333
Expenditure per pupil	3 430

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	100 530
Balance carried forward to the next	175 376

55. The leadership of special educational needs is very good. The present SENCO has been in post for less than a year and has made substantial improvements in documentation and recording systems and the organisation of the learning support base. The SENCO provides a good role model and works effectively with staff to ensure that pupils with special educational needs receive the support available. The management of special educational needs is good. A formal review of special educational needs took place prior to the present SENCO being appointed. It identified several areas where improvement was necessary; these have all been addressed by the school and the present post holder. Regular reviews are carried out by the LEA working closely with the SENCO. There is a vision for, and planned development of, special educational needs, especially in the area of numeracy. There has been substantial improvement since the LEA review. There is good support for special educational needs within the school by teaching staff and by the governing body. A governor regularly liaises with the special educational needs co-ordinator.

### Sixth form

56. The school's leadership and management of the sixth form are good. There is a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses both by the school and by governors. The school does its best to meet the needs and aspirations of its students, although numbers in teaching groups are often very low. The governors are well aware of this, but are clear about the opportunities they wish to make available to all pupils, including those who may not wish to travel further to attend a sixth form.
57. Sixth form costs are strictly monitored and no subsidy has been made from 11-16 funds in recent years; the sixth form has fully met its own costs including heating and lighting. This year and possibly next, there will be a shortfall in sixth form income due to the dip in the numbers of students in Year 12; this shortfall will not be enough to erode teaching and resource provision. To make the sixth form more cost effective and to ensure that numbers in classes are large enough to encourage students to discuss and compare their work with others, the school is well on the road to developing ways of improving its provision through collaboration with other post 16 providers in the area. The appointment of a consortium manager is imminent, as the Learning Skills Council has approved funding. Good management already uses video conferencing to put students in touch with work in a local university and another school. The school has also negotiated book loans from a local university so costs are kept down for both students and the school. All these features are indicative of the school's very good application of best value principles; it challenges itself to do better, compares its performance with other providers, consults stakeholders and competitors, and seeks to do its job more efficiently.
58. Monitoring and evaluation of data about how well students do is satisfactory overall, but not sufficiently developed to ensure that all students achieve as well as they could. The social and academic progress of students is appropriately monitored and action is taken if individual students are seen to be underachieving. Students review their progress with their subject teachers and their tutors, but the overview of all their work and their overall progress is not focused enough to ensure that they do the best they can. Students indicated there is inconsistency in useful evaluation.





## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4**

#### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

##### **English**

Provision in English is **good**.

##### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Achievement is good.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Leadership and management are good.

##### **Commentary**

59. National test results at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were significantly better than those in 2002 and were above average. The trend over the last three years is an improving one. Results in 2003 are confirmed by the standard of work seen in Year 9 now, which is average; there are almost two terms before the next tests and, consequently, time for standards to rise further. Test results in 2003 were much better than they were in similar schools because of rising levels of attainment pupils have when joining the school and the good teaching they now get.
60. GCSE results in 2003 were below average, but above those in similar schools. Results in literature were better than those in English. The 2003 results were lower than in 2002, but pupils' progress was satisfactory in relation to their prior attainment. There was a large proportion of boys, in particular, who were low attainers and this was reflected in the results. Twenty-seven of the most able pupils also took their English examinations when they were in Year 10 and this deflates published results for 2003.
61. Standards in Year 7 appear to be rising in that many pupils – boys and girls – are producing work of a higher than average standard. Longer pieces of writing are often to be seen, even in Year 7, and pupils up to Year 9 are clearly responding to the challenges set them by good teachers. Levels of accuracy in reading and writing and skills in speaking are at least as good as in schools nationally; listening skills are better than those found in many schools. These attainment levels represent good achievement, because by Year 9 pupils are reaching higher standards than one would expect given their prior attainment. Many use computers to redraft their written work, and some work of high quality can be seen. Pupils with special educational needs achieve just as well as other pupils. Standards of work in Year 11 are average.
62. The positive attitude of the vast majority of pupils contributes to their good achievement. So does the good teaching they receive. Pupils learn well because they experience well-planned and imaginative lessons that cover the whole range of skills and knowledge that the curriculum requires, including the use of ICT. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject, even those who are non-specialists teaching a few lessons of English; they have good control of their classes. In just a few lessons, pupils are allowed to talk off-task, which hinders learning, but most lessons are very orderly and well structured. Attention is given to the needs of pupils who need more challenge or more support, often in the form of different learning activities. A few lessons lack pace, leading to less work being covered, but there are also some lessons where the teachers try to do too much in the time. Homework varies in quality: it sometimes focuses on the completion of classwork, with the result that the pupils who work fastest have less to do at home. However, work is marked well and pupils benefit from a rigorous system of assessment through which they are set challenging targets. Teachers have a very clear idea of the standards their pupils are reaching, and this information is communicated effectively to the pupils.
63. The subject is well led and managed. The head of English has an effective system of monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning, and is bringing together well the

skills of a strong team of teaching staff, who are able and willing to share good ideas and resources. The detailed schemes of work enable new, temporary or inexperienced teachers to operate smoothly. Time is given to support a newly trained teacher and students in training. Effective systems for collecting, analysing and using data are in place, and there is a strong culture of self-evaluation. There has also been a readiness to develop the curriculum and try new methods. Some staff are becoming more familiar with new technologies: an interactive white board is now available, and ICT rooms can be booked, but more resources of this kind are needed – ideally, an ICT suite for English once better accommodation is in place.

64. English is now an improving subject; standards dropped for a while after the previous inspection, but are quite definitely on the way up again

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

65. Standards of literacy across the school are average; limitations in literacy do not prevent access to the curriculum and good provision is made for pupils who have special educational needs. Listening skills are good; in some lessons pupils are reluctant to speak out in class, but work seen in drama lessons shows that high standards are possible. Pupils' writing reaches satisfactory levels, and most read competently, although private reading needs to be developed more in the curriculum: none was seen in tutorial time, for instance. The English department has made a good contribution to the development of literacy skills in recent years, using booster lesson funding well, organising summer schools and encouraging the use of 'starters' and 'plenaries' in lessons (activities designed to set the lesson off and draw it together). Other departments have followed this lead, but provision is not always consistent. In science, for example, although there are displays of key words, they are small and not always pertinent to what is being taught. In the best lessons, key terminology is used well, and the definition and pronunciation of new words is emphasised. This is not true of all lessons, however, and there are instances of mere copying of text. Lower attaining pupils in art and design find writing a challenge; they manage to describe, but not evaluate, and the expression of feelings is not easily achieved. In design and technology, weaker pupils struggle with spelling, but most can express themselves adequately, and can describe, analyse and evaluate. Across the curriculum, there are examples of pupils using language in a wide range of contexts and tasks, and the good teaching that is found in most lessons ensures at least satisfactory progress in this area.

### **French and German**

Provision in modern languages is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching and learning is good and pupils' achievement is good.
- Pupils' attitudes are positive and they are concerned to do well.
- Leadership and management are good and the department work well as a team, sharing ideas and spreading good practice.
- Assessment information is used well to raise standards.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to speak and listen to the foreign language.
- Pupils' listening skills need to be developed further.
- Resources and accommodation are unsatisfactory.

## Commentary

66. Standards of work are broadly average in both French and German. This represents good achievement in relation to pupils' prior attainment. Standards attained in GCSE examinations in 2003 were below average in both languages. Pupils did better in French than in their other subjects, but slightly worse in German. Girls perform better than boys in both languages in examinations, but in work seen there is no significant difference. Overall there has been an improvement in examination results over the past four years. All pupils achieve a grade at GCSE.
67. In work seen during the inspection writing skills are well developed; in French pupils write at length and in detail to describe events in the past, present and future; writing in German is more limited, with little evidence of pupils producing longer pieces on a regular basis. Pupils have a good understanding of grammar and average and higher attaining pupils apply rules largely accurately. Lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs write effectively following good guidance. Listening and reading skills are average; pupils identify the main points from texts and extracts of speech, lower attaining pupils with some help. Pupils are less secure in speaking and responding spontaneously.
68. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good, enabling pupils to achieve well. It is better overall in Years 7-9 than in Years 10 and 11. More than nine out of ten lessons were satisfactory or better and two-thirds good. There is a good level of consistency across the department. Assessment information is used well to meet the needs of pupils in lessons; this and the objectives of the lessons are regularly shared with pupils, who track their own progress and set targets. New language is presented clearly, using visual aids and the overhead projector; pupils, therefore, rapidly understand and use the new language, identify and apply patterns. They are given opportunities to use the language themselves in pairs, but this is usually limited to rehearsal; opportunities are missed to use the language to give and gather information and develop skills of listening and responding.
69. Lessons are well planned; activities are appropriate and well sequenced. Pupils respond enthusiastically and make good progress in speaking and reading when games are used to practise new language. Opportunities are missed to use 'plenaries' to develop listening and reading skills by predicting what they are going to read or hear and to demonstrate how answers are found. In a minority of lessons lower attaining pupils have difficulty identifying the main points from extracts of speech because they are not given adequate support. Marking is very thorough and gives pupils very good guidance about how to improve. Opportunities are often missed to use French and German to conduct lessons and, for example, to challenge higher attainers to interpret for others. Similarly, in a minority of lessons, the emphasis on reading and writing skills hampers the progress of lower attaining pupils. In a very few lessons pupils' behave poorly and lose concentration when control and management are weak or their needs are not adequately addressed.
70. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has a clear idea of strengths and weaknesses, based on close analysis of assessment data. Teachers work well as a team, sharing ideas and spreading good practice; this results in good level of consistency across the department. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are good. The department has implemented the National Key Stage 3 Strategy successfully and applies its knowledge of different learning styles effectively. Appropriate action has been taken to raise standards and to address the issues in the last report. Poor acoustics and facilities in a mobile classroom and the need to teach some classes in non-specialist classrooms, at a distance from the languages area, limit learning experiences and hamper progress, particularly in speaking and listening skills. Similarly, large classes in Years 8 and 9 make it difficult to ensure that lower attaining pupils receive appropriate support. There are insufficient textbooks, which limits the kind of homework that can be set. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well in Years 7-9.
- Pupils respond well to good teaching.
- Pupils do not achieve well enough in Years 10 and 11.
- Leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

71. National test results at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were broadly average and well above those for similar schools. There was a small improvement over the 2002 results. Over time the rate of improvement of results is faster than that seen nationally. Girls perform better than boys. The department has not yet identified the reasons for this.
72. GCSE results in 2003 were well below average compared with those in all schools and with those in similar schools. Boys' and girls' results were similar. This constitutes a fall from 2002 when results were broadly in line both with national figures and with those for similar schools. Lower results partly stem from some pupils having been entered for the higher tier of GCSE examination, but performing less well than predicted so that they failed to gain a grade. If they had been entered at intermediate level, they could have been expected to gain at least a grade D. Pupils in this year were also of lower prior attainment than the previous Year 11. Changes in expectations for statistics coursework also meant that the pupils did less well than usual in spite of the department's efforts to prepare for them.
73. Improvement comparisons for the pupils across their time in the school show that they have made and continue to make sound progress overall, but this reflects good progress in their earlier years and insufficient gains across Years 10 and 11.
74. Pupils' work seen in lessons and exercise books for the most part reflected this position with that of pupils in Years 7-9 on the high side of average and that in Years 10 and 11 below average rather than well below. Achievement is better in Years 7-9 because the department has worked hard to improve the schemes of work in these years and, with very good support from the LEA's advisory team, is belatedly learning lessons from the National Numeracy Strategy; management of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 lags behind in both respects.
75. By Year 9 about seven out of ten pupils are at National Curriculum Level 5 or above. This is in line with the national average and represents at least satisfactory progress since the time when they joined the school. All areas of the National Curriculum are covered and pupils display no notable weaknesses in one area as opposed to another. In Years 10 and 11 there are very few pupils unlikely to achieve a grade whilst just two out of five are on course for a grade C or better compared with the national average, which is nearer 50 per cent.
76. Teaching is satisfactory throughout and no unsatisfactory teaching in lessons was seen. The department has a relatively stable teaching force. Some of the longer established teachers in the department are not mathematics specialists. Occasionally this shows in their work in matters of detail, but they are all experienced so that their effect overall is positive. Pupils' work is usually corrected and sometimes marked carefully so that they are shown how to improve. Teachers insist upon and obtain high standards of behaviour so that pupils behave well and concentrate on their work. There is insufficient use of ICT as a tool for learning or for teaching. There are interactive white boards in two classrooms. These are used, but are not, as yet, being fully exploited.
77. Literacy standards are sufficient to enable the pupils to read and understand their work. In longer pieces of work more able students write cogently and well. Development of literacy could be better supported, however. Teachers are careful when introducing and explaining new vocabulary, but do not always use the vocabulary lists on the classroom walls effectively when doing so. They also do not follow the school's policy for correcting spelling and grammar.

78. The department has recently become involved with initial teacher training and support for students is considered good by a local university. Extensive staff development over recent years is beginning to pay dividends, but progress at developing a wider range of teaching and learning strategies in the classroom has been too slow. Everyone connected with the department wants the best for the pupils and works hard to provide it, but not enough time and focus in meetings or outside of them has been dedicated to co-ordinating the work. Hence ideas, lesson plans and teaching materials are not sufficiently shared, especially for Years 10 and 11. Opportunities for using ICT or enhancing pupils' experiences of the spiritual and moral dimensions of mathematics are not identified in schemes of work. The use of assessment is not an integral part of planning. Improvement since the last inspection is not good enough. Leadership and management of the department are, therefore, unsatisfactory.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

79. Pupils demonstrate mathematical and numerical skills that are sufficient for them to be able to gain access to the other subjects they study, but lower attaining pupils, in particular, lack confidence. In a science lesson, for example, when faced with a simple subtraction, a pupil responded, "I don't know. I'm no good at maths". In contrast, Year 11 pupils do good mathematics measuring voltage and current for a filament lamp, and in geography graphs are used a lot and are usually well drawn.
80. Teachers have received training in how to recognise and incorporate teaching of mathematical ideas in their lessons and in schemes of work, but this training has not been sufficiently followed through. There is a draft policy for numeracy and one or two interested departments are beginning to consider how best to co-ordinate numeracy work across the curriculum, but in relatively few subject departments is sufficient emphasis placed on teaching mathematical skills.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good leadership of the department leads to good teamwork and a sense of purpose.
- Teachers are positive about using ICT to improve opportunities for learning.
- Standards are improving in Years 7-9 because of good teaching.
- Teaching is less successful in capturing pupils' interest in Years 10 and 11.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is not carefully planned.

### **Commentary**

81. Pupils' results in national tests in Year 9 show significant improvement in the last three years, especially in the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels. Overall, in 2003, they were above average and close to well above average. Pupils performed very much better than in similar schools because of good teaching and a positive attitude to work, still evident in Year 10. Girls did better than boys, but the gap is narrowing. Standards of work seen during the inspection were also above average.
82. GCSE results in both 2002 and 2003 were below average, particularly in the proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades. Compared with pupils in similar schools, results are average. Girls did better than boys, even though their standards had been similar when in Year 9. Standards of work seen during the inspection were broadly average, but pupils tend to do less well in science during Years 10 and 11 than in their other subjects.
83. Pupils' standards in science are average on entry to the school. Their achievement while in Years 7-9 is good, so standards are above average by the end of Year 9. In Years 10 and 11 achievement is satisfactory. It is less good than in Years 7-9 because the teaching is less strong.

84. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7-9. They are only satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 because teaching styles do not involve pupils sufficiently in their learning, and too many classes have three or more teachers each week. This restricts progression, and hinders the development of confident working relationships between teachers and pupils. As a result, a significant minority of pupils develop a casual attitude to the subject. This is particularly evident in classes containing pupils with average and below average attainment. Teachers show a good command of their subject. Planning is thorough, but tends to concentrate on what pupils learn rather than on developing appropriate and interesting learning strategies. Time is well used, and there is effective liaison with technicians. There is insufficient liaison with support assistants, so pupils with special educational needs are often provided with inappropriate tasks. ICT is well used, but pupils' standards of literacy are not sufficiently developed. Strategies such as stressing the keywords relevant to the topic are not used regularly. Although teachers liaise with mathematics teachers, pupils still lack confidence when using number. Homework is set regularly, but often fails to extend pupils.
85. Leadership of the science department is good and leads to good teamwork and positive working relationships. Management is satisfactory and the department is organised well. However, the monitoring of assessment data does not lead to strategies for improving standards. There is also insufficient monitoring of the work of teachers, partly because of time, so there are inconsistencies in practice, for example, in grading work and in methods of motivating pupils. There are particularly good teaching skills in a minority of lessons, but there are not enough opportunities for teachers to observe their peers, and so replicate this good practice.
86. Results have improved in Years 7-9, suggesting that in the future examination results in Year 11 will also improve. Good progress has been made since the last inspection, especially in teaching in Years 7-9, and the use of ICT.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Time available for lessons and resources has improved since the last inspection.
- Assessment and monitoring of pupils' work in Years 7-9 have improved and are now satisfactory.
- There is good use of ICT in a number of subject areas.
- Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory.
- Pupils' organisation and presentation of work are unsatisfactory.
- The use of ICT in other subjects is not adequately co-ordinated.

### **Commentary**

87. Standards indicated by teacher assessments of Year 9 in summer 2003 were below average. Standards of work inspected in Years 8 and 9 are below average. Standards in Year 7 are average. Results at GCSE in 2003 were well below average. These results do not reflect, however, standards in the previous six years, which were below average and in line with GCSE results in other subjects. Standards of work in Year 10 are below average whilst standards in Year 11 are average and pupils are performing in line with predicted grades.
88. Pupils' achievement in Years 8 and 9 is unsatisfactory overall. Although sufficient time is now allocated to ICT, in line with the recommendations of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, these pupils have experienced a lack of continuity in their teaching and poorly organised work over the past two years. Pupils' achievement in Year 7 is satisfactory and is benefiting from the better planning now in place. Achievement of pupils in Year 10 is unsatisfactory due to unsatisfactory provision when they were younger. Pupils have not acquired basic skills in their previous time at the school and this is limiting the progress they are now able to make. The achievement of pupils in Year 11 is satisfactory as satisfactory provision was made for them in Year 10; this is reflected in their coursework results at the end of Year 10.
89. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall, although some teaching is good. Although teachers are using the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, they are not adapting the materials to match the abilities of pupils or making good use of the time available. The attention and behaviour of pupils are affected by the lack of challenge in some of the tasks undertaken. Work is poorly organised and presented and insufficient

attention is given to titles, dates, spelling or grammar. Assessment procedures have improved and are now satisfactory, and there have been improvements in teachers' planning, but not enough.

90. Teaching and learning in Year 10 are unsatisfactory. The organisation of the courses is resulting in a lack of continuity for pupils. The progress of those taking the GCSE short course is disrupted by the operation of a 'carousel' with careers and personal and social education – pupils do a few weeks of each, whilst those taking the full GCSE also have more than one teacher. The progress that pupils make is further limited by inappropriate teaching methods used by inexperienced or non-specialist staff. Teaching and learning in Year 11 are satisfactory. All pupils are taking the GCSE short course and while some groups have suffered from a lack of continuity of staffing it has not impacted yet upon their learning or motivation.
91. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Difficulties in staffing the department have resulted in a lack of organisation and continuity and a dependence upon inexperienced, temporary and non-specialist staff. It has been very difficult in these circumstances to establish a clear vision or unity of purpose for the department or to plan for the future. Managers have had to deal with day-to-day difficulties related to staffing and are aware of the need to concentrate upon improving results at GCSE and to continue to improve provision in Years 7, 8 and 9. To these ends they are working in collaboration with the LEA.
92. Despite all the problems reported above, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall. There has been significant improvement in the provision of resources. The ratio of computers to pupils is now average. All pupils take an accredited course in Years 10 and 11 and the time allocated to ICT in Years 7, 8 and 9 has increased. Technical and support structures have been put in place.

#### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

93. The provision of cross-curricular ICT is satisfactory. The senior managers of the school are committed to improving the provision of ICT and this has resulted in a significant improvement in resources, network support and training and support for staff. These improvements have supported teaching and learning in a significant number of subjects. There is evidence of good practice in design and technology with a planned programme in graphic design and use of CAD/CAM in Years 10 and 11. In science, ICT is well integrated into the schemes of work and good use is made of the interactive white board. In physical education teachers use ICT for their administration and teaching with good use of video conferencing between schools. There is good use of desktop publishing in English and in modern and foreign languages in Years 10 and 11. In art and design, pupils work creatively, experimenting with image enhancing software. In other subjects, particularly mathematics and religious education, the use of ICT is not satisfactory. The monitoring of the provision and use of ICT across subjects is also unsatisfactory and there is no monitoring of pupils' progress, across subjects, in their use of ICT.

### **HUMANITIES**

#### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well in Years 7-9.
- Good practice in teaching is not shared well enough.
- Fieldwork enhances well the work done in the classroom.
- ICT is not used well enough to support learning and research.
- More able pupils are not always fully stretched.
- Assessment does not consistently provide pupils with clear guidance on how they need to improve.

#### **Commentary**

94. GCSE results in 2003 were slightly above average; this represents good achievement when compared with pupils' attainment on entry to the school.
95. Standards of work in Year 9 are broadly average. Pupils achieve well. All pupils gain some confidence in writing and using maps, diagrams and graphs as they progress through Years 7-9, but their skills in the

use of computers are not practised sufficiently. Pupils also demonstrate an understanding of both physical and human geography and their related effects on the environment and human activity. Higher attaining pupils need work that has a greater challenge. Pupils with special educational needs make significant progress towards their targets, particularly when receiving additional support.

96. In Years 10 and 11 the standard of work is average. Pupils' achieve satisfactorily overall. Pupils of all abilities make progress in their geographical knowledge, understanding and use of geographical skills. Higher attaining pupils underachieve and need more challenge in their work. The small number of pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.
97. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some good features. Teachers have a good command of their subject. Geographical visits are planned well to extend what is learnt in the classroom. Lessons are satisfactorily prepared and usually draw on a range of activities and resources, but they would be better if pupils were always made clear at the start of the lesson about what they are expected to learn. Pupils' attitudes are generally supportive of learning. Marking needs to have more constructive comments on how pupils can make adjustments to their work in future.
98. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. In a relatively short period the new head of department has produced a set of priorities to address areas for development including improving the book stock and making teaching resources more accessible. He has supported a new teacher well. Leadership is good; management is satisfactory, as the head of department has had insufficient time, as yet, to update procedures.

## History

Provision in history is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good with teachers using their subject knowledge to explain topics well and to check pupils' understanding.
- Pupils show good attitudes and behaviour because teachers manage pupils well.
- Leadership and management are good; the newly appointed head of history has established clear priorities for future development.
- There has been some progress in the application of ICT, but not yet enough.

## Commentary

99. Results in GCSE examinations were well below average in 2003. This represents a fall since 2002 when they were well above average.
100. In Year 9, standards of work are average. Pupils of all attainment levels have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the causes of the First World War and the conditions of life in the trenches and can select information from different sources in order to justify opinions. In Year 11, standards are average. Pupils of all attainment levels understand the impact of the assassination of Franz Ferdinand at Sarajevo and can accurately distinguish between the short and long-term causes of the First World War. Achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is good. They make good advances in acquiring historical knowledge, understanding and skills, and are developing the ability to use source material to support arguments well.
101. Standards are higher than those obtained in recent examination results because staffing changes within the department adversely affected pupils' learning, particularly during revision sessions. The achievement of pupils in lessons is good because the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers use their good knowledge of history to explain topics well and check pupils' understanding. A range of teaching activities, often using historical source materials, enthuse pupils and ensure their concentration throughout lessons. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good because teachers manage pupils well, insist on high standards of behaviour and use appropriate praise and encouragement. The marking of pupils' work is generally helpful, but at times lacks specific guidance on how pupils could improve their grades.
102. Leadership and management are good. The newly appointed head of history has established clear priorities for future development, and is focusing the department on raising results at



GCSE level. Other priorities identified include reviewing schemes of work and other departmental documentation and policies as well as introducing fieldwork activities. A good start has been made in monitoring and evaluating the work of the department.

103. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. There has been some progress in the application of ICT in the subject, but this is an area for further improvement.

#### **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

This is a department in major transition and the headteacher has already put into place much that will very shortly ameliorate the current position.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching, in difficult circumstances, is good.
- Learning by the majority of students is good.
- Attitudes and behaviour of a significant minority of pupils reflect an antipathy to the subject.
- Time restrictions in Years 10 and 11 mean the syllabus cannot be covered in full.
- The current lack of a head of department results in unsatisfactory leadership of the subject.

## Commentary

104. Standards at the end of Year 9 are below levels expected. Some pupils can describe the key beliefs of the religions studied and show understanding of what belonging to a religion and a community involves. However, many students cannot explain how features of religious life and practice make a difference to the lives of individuals. They learn about religion, but do not yet show that they use that learning effectively. Boys are more confident in discussion than girls, but girls' written work is better presented than that of boys. However, work is generally not well presented. Pupils with special educational needs make progress in line with other pupils.
105. The standards seen in class and in pupils' notebooks during the inspection indicate standards below national norms. Pupils study a range of contemporary moral issues from a religious point of view and relate them to their own lives. For example, in Years 10 and 11, students study the causes of prejudice concerning such matters such as homosexuality and abortion. Standards of work of higher attaining pupils in both years are above national expectations. However, the vast majority cannot use biblical or contemporary Christian writings as a basis for discussion about the moral imperatives concerning beliefs, love and prejudice.
106. Teaching, which at the time of the inspection was being carried out almost exclusively by a non-specialist, but highly experienced supply teacher in the most challenging of circumstances, is good overall, particularly in the sphere of classroom management and the sensible and sensitive choice of subject content. Teachers display a strong commitment that is effectively communicated to most pupils, providing a firm basis for learning. Lessons are well planned and teachers use a range of methods that support learning well. There is appropriate emphasis on some aspects of literacy, such as the use of correct technical language.
107. The quality of learning generally reflects pupils' attitudes to the work in hand; some pupils learn successfully, and achieve well. However, for the large majority of pupils, progress and achievement are unsatisfactory. There are several reasons for this. Generally, pupils' attainment across time is affected by their poor levels of oracy and literacy, and their lack of concentration and retention, consequently, they attain below the standards expected. In Years 10 and 11, insufficient time is allocated to the teaching of religious education in order to meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Accommodation is poor and does not create an atmosphere conducive to work.
108. Over and above these barriers, there are several additional current factors that adversely affect pupils' achievement. They stem from the lack of a head of department and from the subsequent lack of credibility given to the subject, including, for example, the subject not being examined throughout the school. This has resulted in a lack of parity of esteem towards the subject, which results in an antipathy amongst a significant minority of pupils, particularly, but not exclusively, in lower attaining groups. Their behaviour in class, stemming in part from that antipathy to the subject, is unsatisfactory. This reduces their progress and the progress of their classmates, because pupils do not remain on task and disrupt those who wish to work well both collaboratively and individually.
109. Leadership and management are currently unsatisfactory and improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. However, much is already in place to ameliorate the position. After 18 months of effort, the school has been successful in recruiting and appointing a new head of department, who takes up post within a matter of weeks of the inspection. His arrival and the

commitment of the headteacher to support him with both appropriate accommodation and time allocation for the subject augur well for the subject's future.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

Provision in design and technology is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils acquire a good understanding of the design process.
- GCSE results in food technology have been well above the school average for many years.
- Good teaching enables pupils to achieve well.
- Pupils have a good attitude to learning and behave well.
- Boys perform less well than girls by a wider margin than is seen nationally.
- Currently the post of head of faculty is vacant and this is not sustainable in the long term.

#### **Commentary**

110. Pupils enter school with standards that are below average. Teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 in 2003 shows the number of pupils achieving National Curriculum Level 5 and above to be well below average overall. Girls attained higher than boys. These results do not agree with the standard of work seen, which is now average, for two reasons: pupils were under-graded in 2003 due to the methods used by the technology areas to award teacher assessment grades; standards have risen recently owing to improved resources of tools and computers. The trend still continues of boys attaining less well than girls.
111. GCSE results in 2003 dipped from 2002 results, which were average when compared to similar schools, to well below average. Results were well below average compared to all schools. However, most pupils achieved their predicted grade based on prior attainment and achieved higher than their average in other subjects. Girls outperformed boys by a wider margin than is seen nationally. Failure to complete coursework and absence were the main reasons for poorer performance of boys. Results in food technology have been higher than those in other material areas for many years because of very good teaching.
112. In Years 7-9, boys generally have weaker presentation skills and do not always complete written work. Pupils of all abilities are achieving well. By the end of Year 9 pupils have a good understanding of the design process. They can design and make quality products in a range of materials. They use tools safely and with some precision. Pupils use ICT including computer aided design and computer aided manufacture (CAD/CAM) effectively.
113. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are average and show good achievement. Pupils build on the skills learnt in Years 7-9 and apply their good knowledge of the design process when solving design problems. They show good analytical and research skills. Pupils generate good design ideas for their products. Improved provision for ICT is having a positive impact on standards. Pupils are able to use this resource as a tool when designing and, to a limited degree, when making their products. The introduction of GCSE manufacturing in Year 10 is proving successful in motivating boys and is raising standards. It provides a vocational dimension to the curriculum, which better meets the needs of some pupils than traditional technology courses.
114. Teaching is good in Years 7-11 and enables pupils of all abilities to learn well. Teachers plan lessons that pupils find interesting and enjoyable and that involve a variety of activities. Pupils behave well and have a good attitude to their work because classroom relationships are good and pupils are well managed. There are good procedures in place for assessing pupils' work and pupils receive good feedback on what to improve. Teachers do not, however, take sufficient account of information about pupils' varying ability and performance when planning work. Learning support assistants, when they are available, are very effective supporting pupils with special educational needs.
115. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Currently there is no head of faculty and the post is shared on a temporary basis. Whilst the department is operating smoothly at the moment, this

situation is unsatisfactory in the long term because no one has the overview for strategic planning or development. The school recognises this and intends to resolve the situation as soon as possible. There is a need to establish a consistent approach to the subject between the material areas and to share the good practice that exists.

116. The accommodation for resistant materials is old and in need of refurbishment. This affects standards because the environment is uninspiring with very limited facility to display or store pupils' work, some of which gets lost or damaged. A few health and safety issues were identified to the school.
117. The department has addressed the issues identified in the previous report and improvement has been satisfactory.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

Provision in art and design is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' achievement is good because good teaching builds on previous learning.
- Pupils make good use of ICT in the creative process.
- Pupils' work is marked thoroughly and constructive advice is given.
- The subject makes a good contribution to the moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
- GCSE results are below average.
- Good classroom practice is not supported or informed by departmental documentation.

### **Commentary**

118. Standards of work for pupils in Year 9 are average. In work and lessons seen, some pupils reached above average standards. Higher attaining Year 9 pupils, for example, can develop an idea from personal research and translate it through various media to produce an individual response. They can generate and manipulate a computer image and use this as a stimulus for collage and paint effects. Colour mixing and application skills are good and pupils work with care and thought. Lower attaining pupils adopt the skills readily, but apply them with less precision. Whilst some pupils are able to produce detailed individual research into, for example, the work of established artists, many pupils' work lacks depth and detail. Some Internet research is not edited and many pupils find it difficult to annotate their developmental work. Low literacy levels shown by some pupils limit their ability to write personal responses to critical evaluation exercises. Extensive use of artistic imagery from other times and cultures is valuable in helping pupils to see the relationship between art and society. Sketchbooks are used well. They form a good record of a pupil's artistic development and a valuable resource for future work. The sketchbook of one lower attaining pupil showed that he was experimenting with colour, shape and pattern in a much freer way than previously. There is clear progression evident in many projects and because pupils enter the school with below average ability in art and design, their achievement, overall, is good.
119. GCSE results in 2003 were below average. Results were lower than in 2002, but were in line with pupils' predicted performance. Comparative figures show that girls perform better than boys, but that both groups perform better than the school average. Work seen in lessons is broadly average and reflects, partly, the relatively more able pupils now being taught. Higher attaining pupils have good observational drawing skills and show good experimentation with colour and a wide range of media. The work of local artists is used to broaden the range of stimulus material available to pupils and increase their understanding of local culture. Although some pupils do not annotate developmental work well, the resulting artwork is often colourful and imaginative. Critical analysis skills are better at this stage, but responses to the work of established artists are often limited to technical and compositional elements rather than the emotional and aesthetic impact of the work. Pupils use ICT well, both for personal research and in the classroom. For example, Internet material formed a valuable part of pupils' work on 'artwork of the Berlin wall' as well as contributing to their understanding of a key historical event. Good support from teacher and learning support assistant enabled one pupil with special educational needs to produce a worthwhile response to this project. Achievement for all pupils continues to be good.

120. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers establish good working procedures and pupils know what is expected of them. Pupils with potentially difficult attitudes are managed well, involved in the work and given good individual help and advice. Consequently, learning is good and pupils work with a sense of purpose. Good collaboration with classroom support assistants ensures that pupils with special educational needs are fully included in lessons and well supported in their learning. Teachers promote pupils' literacy and discussion skills through good group evaluation sessions that allow pupils to respond to their own work and that of established artists. The use of ICT in some art and design projects is particularly valuable for improving the work of boys. Technician support for teachers has improved since the last inspection, but there is still insufficient time allocated.
121. Leadership of the subject is good. There is a strong commitment to improving standards and development plan objectives are directed towards this end. A strong team of teachers makes a good contribution towards the personal development of pupils. Management, however, is satisfactory. Whilst assessment procedures and schemes of work have been revised since the last inspection, there are no written policies to support some of the good practice seen in teaching, or to articulate the procedures for monitoring the work of the department. Consequently, information on, for example, the relative performance of boys and girls, Year 9 teacher assessments and trends in GCSE results, is not readily available to inform curriculum development. Pupils experience a broad and balanced curriculum that includes a course in expressive arts. Art clubs provide good curriculum extension activities, but further enrichment through visits to galleries is limited.
122. Since the last inspection there have been satisfactory improvements.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are good.
- There is very good management and control of pupils.
- Pupils have good attitudes and behave well.
- There is insufficient use of ICT in Years 7-9.
- There is a low take-up for extra-curricular activities and instrumental teaching.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

123. There were no entries for GCSE music in 2002 and 2003. In work seen, standards of attainment are average overall. Pupils in Year 9 are achieving well in relation to their standards on entry to the school. The small number of pupils taking music in Year 11 are achieving well in relation to their musical experience prior to starting the course. There are no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls or of pupils from different ethnic groups. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well, profiting from the essentially practical nature of the curriculum that is offered.
124. In Years 7-9, pupils' singing is well pitched and enthusiastic and they are able to hold independent parts securely. They have a sound knowledge of staff notation and can identify notes on the stave and keyboard well, however, they have difficulty in applying this knowledge and understanding to performance. There is a good feeling for rhythm and pupils can play in time with a steady pulse. They understand chord structure and are able to use this knowledge in simple improvisations, but their fingering techniques are weak and performances lack fluency as a result. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' compositions show an imaginative use of timbre and texture to create mood and tension. When composing they use ICT very effectively to sequence and record their compositions.
125. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7-9 and Years 10 and 11. Very good management and control of pupils, combined with well-planned lessons and a good variety of activity, result in effective learning with pupils working productively. Teachers have good subject knowledge and grade work well. Explanations are clear, but sometimes go on too long with a lack of pace resulting. Pupils' concentration is generally good; they collaborate well when working on keyboards and also work well independently. This is particularly the case in Years 10 and 11 where pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. For example, Year 10 pupils

give up their own time to do the course at lunchtime and after school. Teachers most often give a good level of individual help that is well matched to pupils' needs. This particularly helps those pupils with special educational needs to make progress, but sometimes tasks set could be better matched to the differing ability levels within the class. Corporate music making is well used in vocal work, but is underused when the pupils are playing on keyboards.

126. The leadership of the department is new and is satisfactory overall. The curriculum is well planned with a good level of detail in the schemes of work, but the department has a low profile and the level of extra-curricular activity is low. Management is good; resources are well organised and instrumental teaching is well co-ordinated. Accommodation is unsatisfactory and limits what can be achieved, for example, the music room is too small for group work and is so resonant that it is difficult for pupils to hear what they are playing. The lack of computers also severely limits the use of ICT in Years 7-9.
127. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The quality of teaching has improved and there are now GCSE groups in both Years 10 and 11. There is good use of ICT in Years 10 and 11. However, there is still no improvement in the use of ICT in Years 7-9, attainment has not improved and there is still low participation in extra-curricular activities and GCSE courses.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Leadership and management are good.
- There are good relationships between teachers and pupils.
- Pupils are interested in the subject and work hard in lessons.
- Units of work are too short to ensure good progression.
- There is insufficient use of National Curriculum Levels in the assessment of pupils' work in Years 7-9.

### **Commentary**

128. Teacher assessment of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 in 2003 indicates that standards are similar to those seen in most schools nationally. GCSE results in 2003 were lower than in the previous year. However, they were still in line with national averages.
129. Standards of pupils' work in Years 7-9 are average overall. In rugby league, in Year 9, there is a wide range of attainment. Pupils understand the game, can pass and receive the ball on the move and understand defensive team play. In netball, standards of passing and receiving are satisfactory, and pupils use these skills in dodging and passing in games. Pupils achieve well in Years 7-9, particularly to reach national standards in activities such as basketball and hockey, which they may not have experienced in junior school. Standards in Years 10 and 11 in core and GCSE physical education are average and pupils achieve satisfactorily. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of team play in hockey and rugby, and generally have sufficient skills to be effective in games. In rugby, pupils have good handling skills, and understand the importance of drifting defence. In hockey, pupils pass and receive when moving, but many pupils do not have confidence in using reverse stick. In GCSE theory, pupils understand skeletal and muscular systems, methods of training and fitness testing.
130. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which is well used to give detailed explanations and demonstrations, leading to good learning by pupils. Lessons are well planned and prepared with challenging practices suitable for pupils of different attainment levels. In a Year 9 rugby league lesson, the grouping of pupils of similar abilities helps the teacher set practices well matched to pupils' skill levels. In GCSE theory, innovative teaching helps pupils learn the anatomy of a synovial joint through a simulated construction of the joint. Pupils are interested in the subject and respond well to teachers, with whom they have good relationships. When given the opportunity pupils can take charge of their own warm-up activities at the start of lessons.
131. Leadership and management are good. The new head of department has a very clear vision of how to move the department forward, as a result of good evaluation. There is a good ethos in the department, with an

effective team of younger and more experienced teachers. There is a shared commitment to provide many opportunities for all pupils, both through lessons and a good range of extra-curricular activities. There are strengths in rugby league, netball and athletics. There has been good progress since the last inspection.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **Child development**

One lesson was sampled in Year 10. Teaching and learning were satisfactory and standards were average. Pupils displayed interest in learning about sensory development. In 2003, GCSE results were in line with those in similar schools. One pupil was commended by the examination board because she achieved one of the five highest marks in the country.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership and management are very good.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Pupils have good attitudes to the subject.
- Citizenship makes a very strong contribution to the personal development of pupils.
- The time allocated to citizenship in Years 10 and 11 is insufficient.

## **Commentary**

132. Citizenship is taught as part of the personal, social and health education programme and is a comparatively new subject. As yet the school does not offer a GCSE course in citizenship. Pupils in both Years 7-9 and Years 10 and 11 achieve well in attaining above average standards. Higher attainers are well challenged and produce good written work. Lower attainers show a secure grasp of essential themes and arguments. There are no significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls or of pupils from different ethnic groups. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are well integrated into all activities and achieve well.
133. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned with a good variety of approaches that engage the pupils and maintain interest, for example, ICT is well used. There is also good use made of visiting speakers from outside agencies such as the police and local magistrates. Teachers have good relationships with pupils, managing them well, and this ensures concentration and good behaviour. Pupils have a good attitude to the subject and take it seriously. They collaborate well in group work, but also work well independently when required, so they make good progress. In most lessons there is a good emphasis on enquiry and discussion, but in some there could be more opportunities given for debate. Through the wide range of topics and issues covered the subject makes a very strong contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
134. Leadership and management are very good. Schemes of work are detailed and comprehensive with some excellent features. They provide very good guidance for the large team of staff, drawn from different departments, who teach the subject. Teachers are well co-ordinated and consistency is effectively monitored through a variety of strategies.
135. Citizenship was not taught as such at the time of the last inspection. The school has looked carefully at how citizenship was being taught across the curriculum and has adopted a much more co-ordinated approach, which is well matched to the current requirements of the National Curriculum. However, the time allocated to citizenship in Years 10 and 11 is very limited and standards could likely be even higher if this was increased.

## **SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM**

In the inspection, eight subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002:



**2002 Level 3 GCE AS level courses**

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Film studies	8	100	88.6	100	27.5	57.5	
Art and design	5	100	90.0	40	42.7	36	39.0
English/English language	10	100	92.0	50	29.9	46	35.7
Design and technology	8	100	89.2	25	32.0	40	35.7
General studies	1	100	78.6	0	25.7	30	30.0
Mathematics	5	100	74.2	60	34.3	44	31.3
Biology	2	50	81.6	0	33.2	10	33.2
Geography	7	85.7	88.3	0	36.4	24.3	36.3
History	30	83.3	91.8	33.3	37.2	33.7	37.8
Information and communication technology			78.2		20.6		28.5
Business studies	6	100	80.3	0	18.9	36.7	
Physics	12	100	80.0	33.3	27.5	39.2	
Chemistry	5	100	81.1	80	25.7	52	
Sociology	6	100	83.7	0	33.6	30	33.8
Classical civilisation	9	100	92.9	44.4	46.3	44.4	
Physical education	10	90	80.1	0	19.5	28	
Total	124	93.9	86.0	30.8	33.6	36.8	34.8

**2002 Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses**

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	5	100	96.1	40	48.7	68.8	85.1
Biology	10	70	91.6	20	36.3	48.6	74.1
Business studies (A level)	6	83.3	96.4	0	40	60	76.5
Business studies (VCE)	20	100	87.1	15	16.5	68	60.1
Health and social care (VCE)	7	100	90.1	0	16.3	60	62.5
Chemistry	5	100	94.0	40	45.9	88	81.1
Classical studies	8	87.5	98.5	37.5	52	75	88
Communication studies	7	100	98.3	100	36.8	114.3	81.1
English/English language	4	100	98.3	25	36.5	85	80.1

English literature	5	100	98.5	100	43.7	108	84.3
Film studies	7	100	98.2	100	37.2	114.3	
Design and technology	8	100	95.3	25	35.5	72.5	76.5
General studies	37	83.6	90.1	16.2	29.1	57.8	69.3
Geography	6	50	97.1	0	40.5	23.3	80.9
German	1	100	96.3	0	44.3	60	82.1
History	8	100	97.1	37.5	41.0	82.5	81.2
Information and communication technology	51	52.9	89.1	19.6	22.4	41.2	64.1
Mathematics	5	100	93.3	60	52.2	88	84.7
Physics	12	100	92.8	33.3	42.8	78.3	78.6
Religious studies			96.34		44.0		82.2
Sociology	6	100	95.4	0	39.6	60	79.1
Sports/PE studies	10	90	95.4	0	29.5	56	73.2
Vocational studies			84.5		23.8		60.6
Total	194	89.9	94.8	30.8	39.4	70.4	78.6

### ***Level 2 vocational qualifications***

Qualification	No in final year	%gaining qualification		%gaining merit		%gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	5	100		60		0	
Art and design	4	50		25		0	

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

### **English**

A lesson of English literature was seen, in which teaching and learning were good, reflecting recent results in the subject. Results at A2 in 2002 were well above average and above average in AS. Standards dropped slightly in the 2003 A2 examinations, but AS results were above average again. Almost all Year 12 students continue with the subject into Year 13.

### **English language**

Provision in English is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are above average and students achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Leadership and management are good.

## Commentary

136. The 2002 A2 results, for a small number of students, were in line with those in all schools, although they were better than predicted for the students concerned, who achieved well in the light of their prior attainment. The A2 results for 2003 show a similar pattern. Even better results were achieved in the AS examination in 2003. Current work is average. Although many Year 13 pupils are reluctant to speak out in lessons, when they do, they show a level of insight that is consistent with the quality of writing they have produced. Year 12 students are better at discussing in lessons, and their writing skills are already above average.
137. Good teaching is responsible for this achievement, building as it does on the very positive attitudes of students. Like most English specialists, the A-level teaching staff have a literary rather than a linguistic background, but they have equipped themselves well to teach this subject, and use lively methods to enhance knowledge and understanding. They are sensitive to the needs of their students: a Year 13 teacher, for example, was not afraid to devote lesson time to explaining the basics of grammar to students who did not have a secure enough foundation in this area. A good example of this was seen in a Year 12 lesson on bias in media reporting, where students were given handouts and set tasks – individually and in groups – that ensured they took responsibility for their own learning. Work is marked well and good assessment procedures lead to students having a very good understanding of their achievement and what they need to do to improve further.
138. The department is well led and managed. Staff are deployed well, making use of their strengths in English, English literature and film studies. Good resources are available; although the school library only carries a limited stock of relevant books, students have access to a nearby university library, which allows for a great range of choice when it comes to personal studies chosen by the students. In areas like this, there has been progress since the last inspection and capacity for further improvement is strong.

## Language and literacy across the curriculum

139. Literacy skills present no significant problems in the sixth form. Key skills are no longer taught as a common course for all students; it is assumed that subject teachers will make provision for students to develop relevant communication skills in their own areas, which they do satisfactorily overall.

## MATHEMATICS

The school offers courses leading to mathematics at AS level and A2 level. The students study a combination of pure mathematics, mechanics and decision mathematics. There is a resit GCSE course for those studying other subjects in the sixth form who did not achieve a grade C in mathematics in Year 11.

The main focus of the inspection was on AS and A2-level work in mathematics. The GCSE course was sampled.

A dozen students have chosen to retake GCSE. About half of these obtained a grade D in the summer GCSE examinations; the remainder scored below this. All are improving in their understanding of mathematics, but are finding the work quite difficult in spite of the good teaching they receive. At the current rate of progress up to half of them will gain the grade C they are seeking in the examinations next summer.

### AS and A2-level Mathematics

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Almost all students complete the A-level course successfully provided that they have been successful in the first year of the sixth form.
- Students are positive about their teachers.
- The number of students studying for A level is low.
- Students who begin the course with relatively weak GCSE grades as a starting point find it difficult to cope and are often unsuccessful at AS level.

## **Commentary**

140. The number of students taking mathematics at A level was too few to make realistic comparisons with national figures in recent years. Students' performance compared with their prior attainment was broadly as expected in 2003 and better than expected in 2002. There were no failures. The school allows students to undertake A-level studies if they have a grade C at GCSE or better provided that they show the necessary willingness to work, so this represents a creditable performance.
141. The curriculum has been altered to assist students beginning from a lower starting point than in previous years, with extra attention paid to algebra at the beginning of the course. In spite of this, weaker students are often unable to rise to the demands of A-level mathematics and drop out from the subject at the end of the first year in the sixth form. Very few students fail to complete the second year of the course successfully.
142. Recruitment into the sixth form for mathematics provides relatively small group sizes, especially after attrition at the end of Year 12. Typically no more than seven or eight will study mathematics in Year 12. Currently four are studying for the A2 examinations in Year 13. Invariably students do as well as expected and frequently they perform better than their prior attainment would indicate. Students said that they were warned before beginning on the course that they would find it challenging and have indeed found it so.
143. Standards of work are below average, reflecting the current higher proportion of students studying the subject from relatively weak examination results at GCSE. There is a range of attainment, but all students, and especially those studying physics for A level, find mechanics work more straightforward than pure mathematics. Higher attaining students in Year 13 show a good understanding of the motion of a vehicle on an inclined plane and all, including lower attainers, have gained a reasonable grasp of the concepts of work, energy and power. In contrast, they demonstrate relative weakness when expected to sketch the graphs of algebraic functions and are slow to apply the differential calculus to determine turning points on a curve. Year 12 students also range in attainment from those who are finding the going hard to those who are likely to achieve high grades. Weaker students make simple numerical slips when adding and subtracting vectors and produce muddled solutions to problems related to arithmetic progressions. The more able show a good grasp of the coordinate geometry of a straight line.
144. Teachers are enthusiastic, and teaching is sound with much that is good, although one lesson was unsatisfactory. Lessons are well presented providing the right level of pace and challenge for students of all abilities. Teachers are experienced and well qualified. Lessons typically have good clear explanations and demonstrations from which students are able to learn and make good progress. Use of question and answer techniques is good, but in general students do less practical and discussion work than is best practice. There is also little variety in teaching, which tends to be teacher dominated. Little use is made of ICT; the two interactive white boards were largely used as high quality 'blackboards' in the lessons observed during the inspection. Nevertheless, students are positive about the teaching they receive and appreciate the expertise and knowledge that the teachers show in their lessons. They rightly feel that they are gaining in confidence as well as improving their knowledge and understanding. They are particularly grateful for the opportunities offered by teachers of seeing them outside of normal lessons for extra help when they find the work difficult. Leadership and management are both satisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

## **Mathematics across the curriculum**

145. The key skills course in application of number provided by the school in recent years did not prove popular and is no longer offered. Standards are below those normally seen and affect students' performance in subjects such as biology, where they find difficulty in relating the concept of the time it takes for a reaction

to take place with the idea of rate of reaction, as expressed in an equation. Much teaching of mathematics has to take place in physics; some students have difficulty in applying basic trigonometry to a problem. In design and technology students find difficulty with the concept of scale in working drawings. They also find it difficult to visualise relationships of space in orthogonal projection when, for example, a line or plane looks shorter because it is viewed from a particular angle. There are good informal links between the mathematics and science departments to ensure that they each approach topics in a co-ordinated and rational order. In other respects there are too few efforts made to ensure a rational or cohesive approach to mathematics across the sixth form curriculum.

## SCIENCES

The focus subject was chemistry, but biology and physics were also sampled.

Standards in biology are below average, but improving. Students have a wide range of GCSE grades; examination results in 2003 show that overall achievement is good. Two lessons were observed. Teaching was good in these lessons; teachers have good command of their subject, and students quickly adapt to the rigour of A-level courses.

Standards in physics A level in 2002 were below average. Standards of work seen in a Year 13 lesson were also below average. Teaching and learning were good and students were making good progress. Six of the eight students are not taking mathematics alongside physics; their numeracy is not up to the demands of the course and additional mathematics teaching is needed in physics lessons.

### Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good; teachers have very good command of their subject.
- Relationships with students are very good; teachers are approachable.
- Standards are improving and are just below average.
- There is good use of ICT to improve learning opportunities.
- There is insufficient emphasis on monitoring standards, and data.

### Commentary

146. Students with a wide range of attainment in Year 11 are given the opportunity to study AS and A-level chemistry. Overall standards are below average, but they are improving, and approaching national figures. Based on performance at GCSE, students' overall achievements, in work seen and in examinations, are good. There are no consistent differences between the results of male and female students. Results at AS level are also below average; no students gained the higher grades in 2003.
147. Overall uptake for the subject is low, but increasing; there are no female students in Year 12. All students enjoy the course, so the retention rate is high. Students appreciate the experienced help they are given to adjust to the challenge of the A-level course. They have very good relationships with their teachers, and they readily ask for extra help when in difficulty.
148. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in all lessons. Teachers demonstrate a very good knowledge of their subject, and relate it well to everyday life. The course is well planned, and, as a result, there is a sense of purpose in lessons. Teachers normally control the tendency of a minority of students to indulge in off-task conversations. There is good use of ICT to widen strategies for learning, and regular opportunities to use and improve mathematical skills such as the use of standard form. Communication skills are average, but improve as a result of the extended writing required for coursework.
149. The marking of students' tests and homework is regular, and teachers normally provide encouragement through their comments. There is insufficient reference to AS/A-level standards. In spite of the priority given to target setting, not all students are aware of their target grades, or of how to improve their work in order to achieve a higher grade. Students' notes are mostly well maintained in folders.

150. The head of department leads well and by example; his enjoyment of teaching chemistry provides inspiration to students and staff'. Management of the subject is also good, with increasing availability of data to compare the school's performance with national standards. As yet, there is insufficient analysis of results in order to determine strategies for further improvement. There are also insufficient observations of teaching in order to exchange ideas and improve teaching skills. However, results are generally improving, and overall, the subject is making good progress.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students have positive attitudes.
- Relationships between teachers and students are good.
- Teachers' knowledge of the subject is good.
- Students' previous limited experience of ICT does not prepare them well for an advanced course.
- The range of courses available for ICT in the sixth form is limited.

### **Commentary**

151. Standards in the AVCE ICT course in the 2003 examinations were similar to those in most schools, with 80 per cent of students gaining passes. This is the first year that students have completed this course. Analysis of students' prior attainment indicates that they achieved well.
152. Standards of work in both Years 12 and 13 are average. Students are creating a website as part of one unit of work. They understand the use of hyperlinks, but have not yet put this theory into a practical working website. In spreadsheet work, students are using complex formulae, and conditional formatting. Many students lack background knowledge, particularly in using spreadsheets, and, as a result, they have spent over half a term 'catching up', to a point where they can start their project using this software. In the 'presenting information' unit of work, students have made evaluations of letterheads and application forms, and have a good understanding of the importance of logo design, and the use of font and colour. Students make good use of word-processing skills to present their work, although some lack basic skills in capturing and pasting images electronically.
153. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and explain the use of software well to students, particularly on a one-to-one basis. Lessons are appropriately planned and lesson objectives are shared with students to help them understand what is expected of them. Whole-class teaching is minimal as students most often work individually. Lessons generally lack pace and challenge; there is very little social interaction and little sharing of knowledge. The positive attitudes students have contribute to their learning, but even with teacher support their progress is only satisfactory.
154. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There has been considerable instability in staffing since the advanced course was introduced. Newly qualified teachers and supply staff have been responsible for the courses over the last two years. The acting head of department has overseen the introduction of the AVCE course in difficult circumstances and some students taking this course have achieved well. The AVCE course is the only accredited course available in the sixth form; this may not be suitable for some students, who may only wish to maintain and improve their ICT skills to use in other subjects.

## **HUMANITIES**

Classical civilisation and history were sampled.

The school offers courses leading to **classical civilisation** at AS and A2 levels. Students study extracts from the 'Odyssey' and the 'Aeneid', Greek tragic plays written by Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides and three comedies by Aristophanes. The course is popular and scarcely any students fail.

One lesson was observed in which the students were considering and discussing how to approach answering context questions about Odysseus' time in the land of the Phaeacians on his way home to Ithaca. Benefiting from very good teaching at the hands of an experienced, well qualified and enthusiastic teacher, students, some of whom had studied classics for GCSE and others who had not, refined and honed their linguistic skills and textual knowledge most effectively. Their enjoyment of the stories was palpable. Higher attaining students displayed impressive knowledge and understanding of tales such as that of Hippolytus' death at the hands of his father, Theseus. All learned very effectively from the lesson and are achieving well in relation to what they knew and could do when they joined the sixth form.

One Year 13 lesson of **history** was sampled. Standards were average, teaching and learning were good with students achieving well and showing good attitudes. In 2002, eight candidates were entered for the history A-level examination and results were average.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

### **Design and technology, graphics with materials technology**

Provision in design and technology, graphics with materials technology is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Results are improving and students are reaching higher grades.
- Students' work is assessed thoroughly and they are given good advice on how to improve. However, assessment data is not used precisely enough to identify strengths and weaknesses and set targets for students.
- Students' knowledge and understanding of materials technology lacks depth.
- Changes of teachers and teaching methods have caused concern for some Year 13 students.
- There is no studio space to allow students free access to their work.

## Commentary

155. In 2003, A-level results were broadly average. The proportion of students attaining higher grades increased and comparative figures show that students achieved well. The group was mainly female and females attained most of the high grades. There is now a more even balance of male and female students.
156. Standards in work and lessons seen are broadly average. Some Year 13 students are working to a higher level than this and their project folders contain good research from both primary and secondary sources. They demonstrate a good understanding of the design process. This was evident in class discussion where they could readily identify the strengths and weaknesses in the development stages of their work. Students make good use of ICT to improve the presentation of folders. Students' knowledge and understanding of materials technology is average, but in a class discussion their understanding of the social and environmental implications of design decisions, and of production methods was good.
157. Year 12 students are reaching average standards and there is clear evidence from design folders that they have made good progress since the beginning of the course. Folders contain a good combination of hand-drawn and computer-generated graphics. Their chosen projects arise from real design situations and research material is drawn from various sources. Students' understanding of materials technology and formal drawing skills, however, is weak. For example, their difficulties in understanding the concepts of 'scale' and 'foreshortening' when an object is viewed at an angle, hindered progress in developing orthographic drawings; achievement in this lesson was unsatisfactory because these skills should have been understood at an earlier stage. Achievement, across Years 12 and 13, is satisfactory overall. There is no difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
158. Recent staff changes have resulted in a new team of teachers, relatively inexperienced in teaching A-level work. Wisely, advice has been sought from more experienced practitioners outside the school and this has confirmed that current teaching methods are appropriate and should result in maintaining standards. Inspection evidence supports this. Teachers are committed to improving standards and their own expertise at this level. During the inspection, teaching and learning were at least satisfactory and sometimes good. Students' coursework projects are managed well and they receive good advice on how to improve. Teaching of the materials technology components of the course is not rigorous enough and, since no monitoring of teaching takes place, strengths and weaknesses are not identified. Students' expertise in using computer-aided design and manufacturing equipment is enhanced by contact with a local specialist company.
159. Year 12 students have positive attitudes to the course and value the advice and support they receive. Some Year 13 students, however, have had difficulty in adapting to different teaching styles and have expressed concern for their examination prospects. This has led to strained relationships and additional pressures on teachers in their attempts to counter negative attitudes.
160. The temporary arrangements in place for leading and managing the subject are satisfactory. Course leaders have high aspirations and the clarity of vision to achieve them is beginning to emerge. The present team have made a good start in coming to terms with the requirements of the course, but a more permanent leadership is needed to consolidate and develop the subject. Self-evaluation strategies are not strong enough to provide a clear path for development and assessment information is not used precisely enough to track students' progress and set individual targets.
161. There have been satisfactory improvements since the last inspection. Accommodation is unsatisfactory as there is no studio space where students can get on with developing their ideas at any time in the day; this wastes time and hinders achievement.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

### Film studies

Provision in film studies is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' enthusiasm, knowledge and expertise in the subject are all very good.



- There is very good support for students through detailed marking that identifies where improvement needs to be made.
- Teachers' knowledge of the examination criteria and the preparation given to students to help them achieve grades beyond expectations are excellent.
- Value added in film studies is exceptional.

### Commentary

162. Students consistently exceed expectations in their AS and A2 examinations; students attain grades that are sometimes two grades higher than their prior attainment would suggest. Examination results are consistently above average Standards set by the teacher ensure that they aim high, produce coursework of a high standard and achieve very well.
163. Teaching and learning are very good, characterised by careful preparation and planning and a presentation of material that interests and motivates students. The enthusiasm of the teacher, knowledge of the subject and the ability to translate examination criteria so that students fully understand them all encourage students to rise to high expectations.
164. The teacher uses the technical terminology of the subject and students respond by adopting the same language. Guidance provided ensures that students have a very clear understanding of examination requirements whilst ensuring that they are not given the answers. This was demonstrated in a Year 13 lesson in which a group of students listened to a student presenting his work on Quentin Tarantino. The audience provided critical analysis and evaluated the presentation; their assessment at the end of the discussion was accurate illustrating how well they understood the criteria. Assessment is very good; marking and assessment of work in progress is exceptional. Students have very good feedback about their work and are given good guidance to improve. Students are also encouraged to self-evaluate their work against clear criteria given to them by their teacher. Class sizes are relatively small, but the time expended by the teacher to ensure successful completion of the course is exceptional.
165. Students' knowledge and understanding in a Year 12 class were good. They were able to make considerable progress in preparing an assignment. The teacher used 'brainstorming' to give them confidence in how much they knew and this provided notes from which to further their personal research and complete the coursework task.
166. Leadership and management are both very good. The teacher's enthusiasm is infectious. Dedicated marking and assessment and high expectations contribute to the high level of achievement made by all students. Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

### HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

#### Sports studies

Provision in sports studies is **very good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are very good.
  - Leadership and management are very good.
  - Students have very positive attitudes and value the subject.
  - There are very good relationships between teachers and students.
167. Standards in A level in 2002 were below average. However, in 2003 there was a significant improvement, with three-quarters of students gaining grade C or better. Students achieved well.
168. Standards of work in both Years 12 and 13 are average and students are achieving well. Students have satisfactory understanding of mob games and how public schools influenced the development of structured games with rules. Students have studied energy systems, and know how the aerobic system works. In comparative physical education, students are able to compare the development of high school sport in the USA with school sport in the UK. Students make good use of their knowledge of the anatomy of the heart as they learn about more complex structures and the passage of blood around the body during exercise and at rest.
169. Teaching is very good. Lessons are very well planned and prepared, with high levels of challenge, leading to students making significant progress in their understanding of the theory of physical education. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which enables them to give very detailed explanations and to focus questions very well. Teachers make very good use of a range of teaching styles, which engages students fully in tasks. Students have very positive attitudes to their work, and this contributes to the quality of their learning. The interactive white board is very well used, allowing teachers and students to share knowledge. Students also have the opportunity to take part in timetabled recreational activities, which many do. The provision of a Community Sports Leader Award (CSLA) course provides further opportunities for students to gain nationally recognised accreditations.
170. Leadership and management are very good. There is a drive to improve standards; very good evaluation of the teaching of A-level courses and analysis of student performance is beginning to take effect. There has been good progress since the last inspection with the successful introduction of an advanced course, whilst still maintaining the CSLA and recreational activities.

## **BUSINESS**

Provision in business education is **satisfactory**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is a good range of business education courses to meet the needs of all students.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Standards are above average and achievement in AVCE business is good.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory with some good features.
- Teaching is not sufficiently monitored to increase effectiveness by disseminating best practice.
- Weaknesses in students' literacy lower performance in examinations.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory for current provision and is insufficient for the potential expansion of the department.

## **Commentary**

171. In recent years, A2 results have been in line with national figures, although in 2003, results were below average. At the intermediate level of GNVQ, results at the pass level in 2003 were in line with the national average, but insufficient numbers gained distinctions or merits. AVCE students who completed the course both in 2002 and in 2003 attained results that were above, and in some cases well above national averages. Standards on entry to the sixth form are at best average and a significant proportion of students are below average. Students' achievement in A levels and GNVQ is satisfactory. In AVCE, their achievement is good, and some students achieve very well. Students from all backgrounds achieve equally well.

172. Standards of A-level work in Year 13 are generally below average. Higher attaining students' projects are interesting, well produced and professionally presented and they make good progress in understanding the central ideas of business. However, too many students show a lack of wider reading. Year 12 students demonstrate growing skills and confidence in the application of analysis and evaluation to business concepts and theories. However, they come from a very low base on entry to the sixth form and, although achieving well, attain standards below average. There are three times as many male students as females. Female students do as well as male students, particularly in the presentation of work. Current Year 13 GNVQ students produce work that is broadly average. Standards of Year 12 students are varied. Some higher attaining students already indicate standards above pass and merit rates in their work, but too few, overall, attain levels above pass rate.
173. AVCE students' work is at least above, sometimes well above average. The strength of the students' classwork is their basic understanding of the subject matter and the steady accumulation of knowledge. Relative weaknesses are the evaluation and interpretation and analysis of data.
174. The quality of the teaching on all courses in the department is good; some lessons seen were very good. The best lessons were typified by teachers' excellent rapport with students. Effective use is made of case studies and other activities to allow students to apply and extend their learning. Progress is best where students participate in their own assessment. On the rare occasions where teaching is only satisfactory, it is characterised by a lack of pace and challenge and a lack of effective strategies to engage students, keep them involved and check their learning throughout individual lessons.
175. Students' learning reflects the quality of teaching. Where lessons are exciting and challenging, students' attitudes are mature and they sustain interest. Too often, however, some students, particularly in Year 12, display an immaturity in class, which militates against their achieving their full potential. Higher attaining students maintain intellectual rigour and portray evidence of wider reading. However, most students attain standards that are below national levels due mainly to their lack of wider and in-depth reading around the subject. This is largely due to additional interests outside school, which use the time they can devote to learning. Consequently, they make only satisfactory progress.
176. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall with some very strong features. A clear strength is that the department offers both the academic and the vocational provision to meet the wide and differing needs and aspirations of current and future cohorts of students. However, there are some common areas for development within these courses: Teaching is not sufficiently monitored to increase effectiveness by disseminating best practice. The lack of sufficient access to ICT and appropriate professional software has an adverse effect on learning. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

### **Health and social care AVCE**

One lesson was sampled in Year 13 when two students learnt about complementary medicine. Teaching and learning were good. Students made good progress in learning about the topic by carrying out individual research using the Internet followed by discussion with the teacher. Standards in this lesson were average, representing good achievement. Currently students are on target to achieve their predicted grades.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement	Sixth form grade	School grade
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	3	3
How inclusive the school is		2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	4	3

Overall standards achieved		4
Pupils' achievement	3	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		3
Attendance	4	3
Attitudes	3	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3

The quality of education provided by the school		3
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well pupils learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	3	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2	2

The leadership and management of the school		3
The governance of the school	3	3
The leadership of the headteacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	3	2

*Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).*

